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# Grand Strategy in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Carter, Bush, and Obama Doctrines

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**CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE**

**GRAND STRATEGY IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY:  
THE CARTER, BUSH, AND OBAMA DOCTRINES**

SUBMITTED TO

PROFESSOR JENNIFER TAW

AND

DEAN GREGORY HESS

BY

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FOR

SENIOR THESIS

SPRING 2013

APRIL 29, 2013



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### **Acknowledgements**

First of all, I would like to thank my reader, Professor Taw, who has been instrumental in guiding me through writing this thesis. She took what was a very broad fascination with U.S. foreign policy and helped me develop a logically coherent argument. Professor Taw is incredibly knowledgeable and the guidance that she has provided me over the course of the past four years has been invaluable. I would also like to thank Professor Spalding, who I credit with sparking my interest in foreign policy in her course and helping me discover Washington, DC. Thank you also to Professor Frangieh and Aleta for encouraging me to study Arabic, allowing me to explore the Middle East, and welcoming me into their home. I would like to thank a number of other individuals who have shaped my time at Claremont McKenna College, namely Professors Haley, Ferguson, Camp, and Espinosa, who have helped me develop as a critical thinker, a writer, an advocate, a global citizen, and a person. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends, who have encouraged me to follow my passions and curiosities from day one—to Provo, Claremont, Amman, Washington, DC, Rabat, and New Delhi. Without their support, I would not be the person I am today.

### Abbreviations

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUMF	Authorization for Use of Military Force
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DMU	Decision Making Unit
EAS	East Asia Summit
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
G5	Group of Five
G7	Group of Seven
G8	Group of Eight
G10	Group of Ten
G20	Group of Twenty
HEW	Health, Education, and Welfare
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEP	National Energy Plan
NSA	National Security Advisor
NSC	National Security Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRC	Policy Review Committee
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SCC	Special Coordinating Committee
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTC	World Trade Center
WTO	World Trade Organization

## Introduction

The President of the United States sits at the epicenter of the U.S. foreign policy establishment. Widely regarded at home and abroad as the most powerful individual in the world, the preeminence of the president in the realm of foreign affairs often goes unquestioned.<sup>1</sup> For the president, foreign policy power derives from Article II of the U.S. Constitution, which assigns the general executive power and the roles of commander-in-chief, chief of state, chief executive, chief negotiator, and chief diplomat to the president.<sup>2</sup> Constitutional factors, as well as the unparalleled level of visibility and influence of the president, shape his role in foreign policy by empowering him to lead, but they also create challenges to that leadership.<sup>3</sup>

As constitutional scholar Edwin Corwin noted, the Constitution does not provide the final word on how the president will interact with other institutions, individuals, and groups in making foreign policy.<sup>4</sup> It is merely the starting point, an “invitation to struggle.”<sup>5</sup> The president is certainly not an autonomous decision maker on foreign policy issues.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, in attempting to formulate and implement a grand strategy, he faces a number of opportunities and constraints at the domestic and systemic levels of analysis. The most notable domestic influences on grand strategy include: (1) advice—sometimes competing—from foreign policy advisors; (2) Congress; (3) domestic public opinion, media, and the electoral process; and (4) the state of the

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<sup>1</sup> Eugene R. Wittkopf and Christopher M. Jones, *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008), 327.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 331.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Berwyn Robison, “The Influence of Presidential Operational Code Beliefs on U.S. Foreign Policy Actions in the Middle East” (M.A. Thesis, University of Southern Mississippi, 2002); Wittkopf and Jones, 330.

<sup>4</sup> Glenn Hastedt, “Presidents, Advisors, and Future Directions of American Foreign Policy,” in *U.S. Foreign Policy Today: American Renewal?* ed. Steven W. Hook et al. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2012), 17.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Robison, 1.

domestic economy. Systemically, the president faces a different set of factors: (1) world events and crises; (2) the relative strength of the U.S. military; (3) involvement in multilateral organizations; (4) U.S. legitimacy; and (5) the state of the global economy. In theory, the influence of these factors, in the form of both opportunities and constraints, remains consistent for all presidents. In reality, however, the pressure they exert varies from one presidency to the next, as each president inherits a unique set of circumstances, events, and crises that have the potential to trigger different factors.

The president's personal foreign policy preferences and goals often take a backseat to these domestic and systemic influences. Under the right conditions, however, "if existing political constraints and opportunities are well understood by the individual in office, and if these factors are in a position to be manipulated, the president is capable of exercising control beyond that of any other individual in the world."<sup>7</sup> In this situation, the president may attempt to implement his own grand strategy vision, consisting of a clear articulation of national interests married to a set of operational plans for advancing them.<sup>8</sup> Grand strategies, which are coherent arguments about the U.S. role in the world, are often set out in advance, with actions following in sequence.<sup>9</sup> Other times, strategic narratives are offered as coherent explanations connecting past policies with future ones.<sup>10</sup> Either way, a well-articulated grand strategy can offer an interpretive framework that tells everybody, including foreign policy officials themselves, how to understand the administration's behavior.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Robison, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel W. Drezner, "Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy?" *Foreign Affairs* (2011): 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.; Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21 (Winter 1996-1997): 3.

<sup>10</sup> Drezner, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



Presidents, in attempting to develop and implement a grand strategy, must first determine what they believe to be the most critical issues facing the U.S. and hence its goals.<sup>12</sup> Then they must formulate a strategic plan of action for achieving, or working towards these goals. If successfully implemented, a grand strategy has the potential to drive home a logically coherent message about U.S. intentions to national and international audiences, which can be particularly beneficial during times of deep uncertainty.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, implementation of a grand strategy has the potential to incentivize non-deliberative decision making on the part of the president and other foreign policy actors. Whether a president can implement a grand strategy, and what the effects are of doing so on U.S. foreign policy, is determined by a number of factor at the domestic and systemic levels.

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<sup>12</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Drezner, 3.

## **Methodology**

This paper seeks to determine under what conditions a president can implement a grand strategy given the nature of domestic and international opportunities and constraints, and what the implications of doing so are for U.S. foreign policy. It will apply this research question to three comparative case studies and seek to determine what domestic and systemic factors are necessary for grand strategy implementation. First, James Earl “Jimmy” Carter, 39<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, will be considered as an example of a failed attempt at grand strategy implementation. Then, George Walker “W.” Bush, 43<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States, will be considered as an example of a successfully implemented, though unsound grand strategy. Finally, the presidency of Barack Hussein Obama II, 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, will be considered, using the same methodology. In doing so, this paper seeks to ascertain whether Obama succeeded in implementing a grand strategy during the first term of his presidency. For each case study, analysis of the president’s personal belief system, quantified via operational code analysis, will be presented. Each president’s operational code and personal characteristics will be weighed against a set of domestic factors that are key to grand strategy implementation. Then, each president’s grand strategy will be considered in light of significant events that tested whether it could respond effectively to challenges at the international level. Ultimately, each case study will address the question of to what degree, in the face of opportunities and constraints, the president managed to put a grand strategy in place, and in doing so, what the implications were for U.S. foreign policy.

While the analysis in this paper is divided into three distinct levels of analysis, in reality, the factors at each level affect each other. As evidenced in the three case studies, decisions, characteristics, and personal qualities at the individual level affect factors at the domestic level,

as well as views of what is possible at the systemic level and interpretations of systemic level opportunities and constraints. Reciprocally, factors at the domestic level affect individual level decisions and characteristics as well as relative capabilities at the systemic level. And factors at the systemic level affect personal characteristics and decisions as well as domestic conditions. The dynamic of complex interdependence that exists among the three levels of analysis ultimately affects the outcome of a president's attempt at grand strategy implementation.

Grand strategy's successful implementation requires a certain set of conditions—good leadership, a clear idea, a permissive domestic environment, and “fit” with the international challenges of the time. But successful implementation does not necessarily mean that a grand strategy is good and, in fact, can create more problems than it fixes. A five-prong test assesses domestic factors that are key to grand strategy implementation: (1) a strong, unified team of foreign policy advisors; (2) party alignment between the president and Congress; (3) a strong presidency; (4) public support; and (5) a strong domestic economy. A two-prong test determines whether a president has succeeded in implementing a grand strategy: (1) whether U.S. foreign policy during his presidency aligned with his grand strategy; and (2) whether the policies he put in place that aligned with his grand strategy resulted in positive outcomes for the global standing of the U.S. In subsequent chapters, these tests will be applied to the presidencies of Carter, Bush, and Obama to determine under what conditions a president can implement a grand strategy given the nature of domestic and international opportunities and constraints, and what the implications of doing so are for U.S. foreign policy. Ultimately, the question of whether a president can succeed in implementing a grand strategy that benefits the U.S. will be determined by the complex interaction among numerous sources of influence at the individual, domestic, and systemic levels of analysis.

## Literature Review

### *Grand Strategy*

The term grand strategy gained currency in the run-up to World War II, when military strategist Basil Liddell Hart and historian Edward Mead Earle reasoned that “states need strategies not just during wars but also in peacetime.”<sup>14</sup> They claimed that through having a grand strategy, “a state might prevent wars from breaking out and prevail in any that did.” The concept of grand strategy was conceived in a world where major threats were identifiable, coming primarily from large states able to accumulate industrial power and mobilize vast populations.<sup>15</sup> Though various scholars and government officials define grand strategy differently, at its heart, the concept is straightforward: “Grand strategy is the ‘big idea’ of foreign and national security policy—the overarching concept that links ends, ways, and means, the organizing principle that allows states to purposively plan and prioritize the use of ‘all instruments of national power’—diplomatic, economic, cultural, and military.”<sup>16</sup> A grand strategy cannot just be a list of foreign policy aspirations or priorities; it must consist of a “clear articulation of national interests married to a set of operational plans for advancing them” that is conceived of and put in place by a president.<sup>17</sup>

### *Individual Level of Analysis*

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Meaney and Stephen Wertheim, “Grand Flattery: The Yale Grand Strategy Seminar,” *The Nation*, May 28, 2012, accessed December 8, 2012 <http://www.thenation.com/article/167807/grand-flattery-yale-grand-strategy-seminar#>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Rosa Brooks, “Obama Needs a Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Policy*, January 23, 2012, accessed December 8, 2012, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/01/23/obama\\_needs\\_a\\_grand\\_strategy](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/01/23/obama_needs_a_grand_strategy); Drezner, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Despite the power of domestic and systemic factors over grand strategy implementation, the president's image of the political universe is related to foreign policy outcomes.<sup>18</sup> According to Alexander George, who was a behavioral scientist and professor of political science at Stanford University, "the way in which the leaders of nation-states view each other and the nature of world political conflict is of fundamental importance in determining what happens in relations among states."<sup>19</sup> George posits that the influence of U.S. presidential psychological characteristics on grand strategy can be assessed via operational code analysis. Originally developed by Nathan Leites in a U.S. government study to assess the beliefs of the Soviet Politburo, operational code is a "political belief system with some elements—philosophical beliefs—guiding the diagnosis of the context for action and others—instrumental beliefs—prescribing the most effective strategy and tactics for achieving goals."<sup>20</sup>

Operational code—"the most widely used concept relating to the link between belief systems and international relations"—is a replicable system of analysis that looks at both philosophical and instrumental beliefs based on the rhetoric of political leaders, assessed through verb usage and strength.<sup>21</sup> Through this analysis, an individual's "schemata"—private and subjective principles that order one's relationship with the social environment—can be

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<sup>18</sup> Sam Robinson, "George W. Bush and the Vulcans: Leader-Advisor Relations and America's Response to the 9/11 Attacks," in *Beliefs and Leadership in World Politics: Methods and Applications of Operational Code Analysis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), vii.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 13 (1969): 190.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, 7; Stephen G. Walker and Mark Schafer, "Belief Systems as Casual Mechanisms in World Politics: An Overview of Operational Code Analysis," in *Beliefs and Leadership in World Politics*, ed. Mark Schafer et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 4.

<sup>21</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 327; Alexander George, "The Causal Nexus between Cognitive Beliefs and Decision Making Behavior: The 'Operational Code' Belief System," in *Psychological Models of International Politics*, ed. Lawrence S. Falkowski (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), 98-9; Robison, 7.

uncovered.<sup>22</sup> Operational code can be assessed based on ten research questions regarding specific philosophical and instrumental beliefs.<sup>23</sup> By taking an agent-centered approach—centered in this case on U.S. presidents as foreign policy actors—one can gain critical insight into how a president’s worldview has the potential to influence grand strategy at the individual level of analysis.

### *Domestic Level of Analysis*

Each president faces a set of opportunities and constraints at the domestic level. These domestic factors can be synthesized into a conceptualization of the foreign policymaking process as a series of three concentric circles developed by political scientist Roger Hilsman.<sup>24</sup> According to Hilsman’s model, the innermost circle contains the U.S. president himself, as well as his immediate advisors and political appointees—such as the secretaries of state and defense, the director of national intelligence, and various under-and-assistant secretaries who bear responsibility for carrying out policy decisions.<sup>25</sup> The second circle contains various departments and agencies of the executive branch whose primary responsibility is to provide policymakers with the necessary information to carry out foreign policy decisions.<sup>26</sup> The outermost circle—what Hilsman calls the “public one”—consists of Congress, interest groups, public opinion, and mass media.<sup>27</sup> The institutions, groups, and individuals at this level are least involved in the day-to-day foreign policymaking process, according to Hilsman. This model aligns with the previously established five-prong test in that the first prong (foreign policy team) is simultaneously contained in the first and second circles, the third prong (strength of presidency)

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<sup>22</sup> George (1979), 96.

<sup>23</sup> Walker and Schafer, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 328.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 328-30.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 330.

is contained in the first circle, and the second, fourth, and fifth prongs (Congress, public opinion, and domestic economy) are contained in the third circle. The implication of Hilsman's model is that because important decisions are made within the innermost circle, the actors in that circle have the greatest potential to facilitate or impede a president's attempt at grand strategy implementation. The influence of various actors in the second and third circles declines with their distance from the center.<sup>28</sup>

The presidential advisory system is another domestic variable that has influence over grand strategy implementation. The executive departments of government and the political appointees who head them are at the heart of the foreign policymaking process, particularly the Departments of State and Defense.<sup>29</sup> The secretary of state is theoretically the president's foremost foreign policy advisor and the Department of State is charged with overseeing the United States' overseas activities.<sup>30</sup> The Department of Defense has gained prominence since World War II. The intelligence community—"America's eyes and ears in a dangerous world"—is also of particular importance to the foreign policy process.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, in recent decades, agencies with responsibilities in international economic affairs and homeland security have gained a greater voice in affecting foreign policy decisions.<sup>32</sup> Together, the secretaries of state and defense, the director of national intelligence, and a number of other senior national security advisors and cabinet officials make up the president's National Security Council (NSC)—his principal forum for considering national security matters.<sup>33</sup> In practice, these senior advisors and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 367-8.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 368.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 368, 388.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 368.

<sup>33</sup> "National Security Council," The White House, accessed December 9, 2012, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/nsc>.

cabinet-level officials exist concurrently in Hilsman's first and second circles of influence, as they simultaneously advise the president on foreign policy issues and oversee large, complex, executive bureaucracies.<sup>34</sup> Taken collectively, the president and his foreign policy advisors make up a multiperson decision making unit (DMU).<sup>35</sup> Which individuals the president selects for these positions, as well as how closely and with what order of priority he heeds their advice, has the potential to determine both whether he can implement a grand strategy and what that grand strategy will look like.

Another institution that possesses multiple avenues of influence over foreign policy is Congress. Regarding the congressional role in foreign policy, the Constitution creates the possibility for interbranch competition by distributing responsibilities across both the executive and legislative branches.<sup>36</sup> Specifically, the Constitution assigns the president a limited number of powerful foreign policy roles, including the general executive power, commander-in-chief authority, treaty negotiation (subject to a two-thirds majority vote in the Senate), and diplomatic appointments (subject to Senate approval).<sup>37</sup> Congress, on the other hand, is assigned more numerous and specific foreign policy powers, including legislating, providing funding to pay for foreign policy initiatives, setting import duties, regulating foreign commerce, overseeing the military, and declaring war.<sup>38</sup> The relationship between the legislative and executive branches with regard to foreign policy can be characterized as: (1) competitive—in which Congress challenges the president for influence; (2) disengaged—in which an acquiescent Congress

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<sup>34</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 368.

<sup>35</sup> Ilan Peleg, *The Legacy of George W. Bush's Foreign Policy: Moving Beyond Neoconservatism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 104-6.

<sup>36</sup> Ralph G. Carter and James M. Scott, "Striking a Balance: Congress and U.S. Foreign Policy," in *U.S. Foreign Policy: American Renewal?* ed. Steven W. Hook et al. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2012), 37-8.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



complies with presidential preferences; (3) supportive—in which Congress generally cooperates with the president; or (4) strategic—in which Congress selects its battles carefully, but is willing to challenge the president.<sup>39</sup> Thus, through both legislative means—such as passing laws and appropriating funding—and nonlegislative means—such as conducting oversight hearings—Congress has the potential to affect a president’s attempt at grand strategy implementation. Further, the balance of power within Congress can have a significant impact on whether a president is able to achieve his grand strategy goals, as hyper-partisanship or a divided Congress can prevent the timely passage of legislation.

Domestic public opinion and media, often manifest in the electoral process, hold considerable sway over U.S. foreign policy. Despite the fact that the American public is generally ignorant about most international issues, The Gallup Organization and other mainstream media routinely ask Americans what they think about foreign policy.<sup>40</sup> U.S. presidents and other government officials claim to take citizens’ foreign policy attitudes and preferences into account in decision making in an effort to represent and serve the interests of their constituents.<sup>41</sup> However, considering the disproportionate influence held by lobbying groups and the foreign policy elite, the voice of the individual American citizen is not likely to have a significant impact on grand strategy formulation and implementation. Taken collectively, though “the public has the potential to have an impact on agenda setting, or on decision makers’ anticipation of later, retrospective public opinion, or on the rhetorical packaging of policy choices.”<sup>42</sup> The public can also exercise control over the foreign policy process through

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 38-9.

<sup>40</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 250-4.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence R. Jacobs and Benjamin I. Page, “Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy?” *American Political Science Review* 99 (2005): 118.

participation in the electoral process, as democratic leaders, including the president, are subject to being forced out of office via the democratic process.<sup>43</sup> Thus, in an effort to stay in office, they generally avoid making policy, and ultimately grand strategy decisions that are likely to receive highly negative media attention. And if they must make decisions that are widely unpopular among the public at large, they face the threat of punishment in the form of being forced out of office.

The final domestic factor that has a significant impact on whether a president is able to put a grand strategy in place is the state of the domestic economy. Considering that the United States' wealth—"the level, sources, and nature of its productive economy"—is among its most powerful tools of statecraft, the state of the economy has a considerable bearing on grand strategy.<sup>44</sup> The economy is an "essential component to almost all political decisions made by the president."<sup>45</sup> In fact, it is often the case that if the domestic economy is struggling, presidents may be forced to turn their grand strategies inwards and focus first on repairing the U.S. economy and then on setting their sights overseas. A booming economy, on the other hand, may leave a president free to immediately pursue a grand strategy. Either way, the state of the domestic economy, along with a host of other domestic and systemic factors, has the potential to impact both the nature of a president's grand strategy and his ability to implement one at all.

### *Systemic Level of Analysis*

Because of the interconnectedness of the international system, world events and crises have the potential to enhance or constrain grand strategy implementation. Without question,

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<sup>43</sup> Bruce Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 55.

<sup>44</sup> Robert J. Art, *America's Grand Strategy and World Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 13.

<sup>45</sup> Robison, 21.

nuclear proliferation, regional conflicts, and humanitarian crises are of interest to the U.S.<sup>46</sup> However, the question of *which* of these concerns pose a serious enough threat to U.S. security to warrant intervention is where grand strategy comes into play. For if the U.S. were to intervene in too many global systemic crises, it would risk imperial overstretch.<sup>47</sup> Regardless, certain events demand attention, even if they may not fall within the intentional purview of a president's grand strategy. In fact, an unforeseen event or crisis, or one that invokes U.S. interests or escalates unexpectedly, may come to define a president's grand strategy. Further, the analysis of systemic crises and grand strategy necessitates a discussion of a foreign policy choice that a president faces, between global hegemonism and cooperative realism.<sup>48</sup> Ultimately, it is essential that a president's worldview match the needs of the international system and that his grand strategy align with global events, although a grand strategy may certainly be shaped by unforeseen opportunities at the international level. For if a president's policy preferences are out of line with real world challenges or U.S. needs, then he risks being unable to respond to these challenges, or responding in a way that is detrimental to U.S. interests.

The relative suitability of the U.S. military is among the most important systemic variables that impacts whether a president can successfully implement a grand strategy. Since World War II, U.S. foreign policy has become increasingly militarized, as policymakers have come to define international political problems in terms of military.<sup>49</sup> According to political scientist Robert J. Art, "military power remains vital to America's statecraft, not only to protect

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<sup>46</sup> Posen and Ross, 23, 29.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 32-43.

<sup>48</sup> Barry Naughten, "U.S. Foreign Energy Strategy and Grand Strategy Choice: Global Systemic Crises Confronting the Obama Administration," *International Journal of Global Energy Issues* 33 (2010): 1.

<sup>49</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 76.

the homeland, but to support its broader interests as well.”<sup>50</sup> While the U.S. is still home to the strongest military in the world, in today’s shifting security landscape, the United States’ military capabilities must be adjusted to new challenges, namely transnational terrorism.<sup>51</sup> With the emergence of “asymmetrical” threats, transnational terrorist organizations and other non-states actors can take advantage of attacking the U.S. without having to confront American forces on the battlefield.<sup>52</sup> This means that to protect U.S. security, a grand strategy must determine which of these threats is most significant, taking into account both past patterns of military preparedness and interventionist practices as well as evolving counterterrorism and counterinsurgency techniques. In formulating a grand strategy, a president must inevitably balance these strategic interests with consideration of defense budgets under fiscal austerity and threats of U.S. declinism.

Within the context of the international system, the United States’ involvement in multilateral organizations presents its own set of opportunities and constraints on the establishment of grand strategy. The U.S. is a member of a vast number of international institutions, including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), G5, G7, G8, G10, G20, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Whether a president’s grand strategy favors strong support of these

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<sup>50</sup> Art, 32.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> P. Edward Haley, *Strategies of Dominance: The Misdirection of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), 133.

organizations, membership in them is a reality of the international system.<sup>53</sup> International organizations serve as a forum in which the U.S. can both exercise its power—via permanent membership on the UNSC, for example—and keep the power of its political and economic competitors—such as China and Russia, which are also permanent members—in check. The question of how strongly a president relies on multilateralism—“working in concert with others, usually on the basis of some principle such as collective security”—and thus participation in multilateral organizations, can shape his grand strategy.<sup>54</sup>

Another factor at the systemic level that has an influence on grand strategy is U.S. legitimacy, which can be represented by “soft power”—a term coined by Joseph Nye, dean of the Kennedy School of Government and former assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs.<sup>55</sup> At its core, soft power means using “an attraction to shared values and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values” to engender cooperation. By most measures, U.S. soft power—and hence U.S. primacy—remains dominant. It is certainly true that “the U.S. can act without the world’s applause.”<sup>56</sup> Yet, it is not smart to discount soft power as “just a question of image, public relations, and ephemeral popularity.”<sup>57</sup> In certain cases, soft power can help soften the sharp edges of policies and reduce the resentments that they engender.<sup>58</sup> Soft power and foreign policy are inherently interconnected; just as soft power has

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<sup>53</sup> Peter Dombrowski, “Renewing U.S. National Security Policy: Something Old, Something New,” in *U.S. Foreign Policy Today: American Renewal?* ed. Steven W. Hook et al. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2012), 95.

<sup>54</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 11.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

<sup>56</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Soft Power and American Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly* 119 (2004): 256

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

some bearing on a president's ability to win approval for a grand strategy, soft power, itself, can be affected by U.S. foreign policy.<sup>59</sup>

The final factor with influence at the systemic level is the state of the international economy. The U.S., as part of the global economy, must be concerned with the economic health of other nations of the world.<sup>60</sup> Americans are "voracious consumers of imported goods" and they export more than any other nation on earth.<sup>61</sup> Because trade is the major engine of U.S. prosperity, the national interests and goals of the U.S. are closely tied to the fortunes of its trading partners.<sup>62</sup> There is also a link between a the state of the global economy and U.S. security, as a "strong world economy enhances U.S. national security by advancing prosperity and freedom in the rest of the world."<sup>63</sup> Because of the United States' dependence on a robust global economy, particularly the need for a secure global oil market, the state of the global economy has the potential to either advance or hinder a president's attempt at grand strategy implementation. Accordingly, in the "21<sup>st</sup> century global economy, where business is truly multinational and economic uncertainty has a ripple effect that extends across national boundaries," the U.S. cannot allow instability to affect itself or its trading partners.<sup>64</sup> Ultimately, a president who is faced with a weak global economy will be forced to address it as part of his grand strategy or risk U.S. security and vitality. Interestingly, while the military, the economy, and U.S. values are systemic variables in that their influence is rooted in their strength relative to

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>60</sup> Joe Bassani, "Saving the World for Democracy: An Historical Analysis of America's Grand Strategy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (M.A. Thesis, Joint Forces Staff College, 2005).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 47.

other countries, they are also rooted in assets, resources, decisions, and priorities at the domestic level.

It remains to be seen whether the U.S. will continue to be the world's "indispensible nation."<sup>65</sup> The 2008 global economic crisis, among other factors, suggest that long-standing concerns over the United States' decline may finally be true.<sup>66</sup> Whether decline is a function of the classic argument of imperial overstretch, of what author and journalist Fareed Zakaria saw as "the rise of the rest," or of American diplomat Haass's "non-polar system" model, the rise of multipolarity in the international system is increasingly a reality.<sup>67</sup> Specifically, most analysts view China, the most populous of the emerging industrial economies, as the most likely competitor of the U.S. in this century—its so-called "peer competitor."<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, despite these potential challenges to its primacy in the international system, American exceptionalism—the idea that Americans are a unique and exemplary group of people—remains a strong current in U.S. foreign policy.<sup>69</sup> "American political leaders continue to justify the global engagement of the U.S. on the basis of American exceptionalism: no other nation has the capability or is morally qualified to lead."<sup>70</sup> There are three aspects of American exceptionalism that are particularly important: (1) America's image of itself as a uniquely democratic nation; (2) its preoccupation with moral and legal justifications for the use of force;

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<sup>65</sup> Dombrowski, 97.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 547.

<sup>69</sup> Siobhan McEvoy-Levy, *American Exceptionalism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 23.

<sup>70</sup> Haley, 9.

and (3) its expectation of success in foreign policy.<sup>71</sup> These principles must be assessed alongside claims of declinism and considered as a factor in the development and implementation of grand strategy. Although the three levels of analysis have been presented as distinct from one another, there is a tradition of looking at how they interact, most notably undertaken by Robert D. Putnam, Peter Gourevitch, and Helen Milner. Putnam puts forth the theory of the two-level game—which recognizes the inevitability of domestic conflict about what the national interest requires.<sup>72</sup> In the same vein, Gourevitch and Milner point to domestic politics as an explanatory variable for foreign policy.<sup>73</sup>

Carter, Bush, and Obama each came into office with a worldview and international aspirations. Carter and Obama both began their presidency with intentions to implement a grand strategy, and Bush began his with a distinctive worldview that later developed into a grand strategy as a result of the September 11 attacks. At the individual level, each had a unique operational code, management, and communication style that determined how well he could articulate his foreign policy vision and oversee its implementation. At the domestic level, each faced partisan competition; the relative strengths of Congress, the presidency, and other foreign policy institutions; public opinion; and relationships among foreign policy advisors. For each, a unique combination of these domestic factors challenged or facilitated his attempt at grand strategy implementation. At the systemic level, each faced or initiated significant events that

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<sup>71</sup> Lee Ann Pingel, “Majoritarianism: Political Culture and Public Opinion,” in *American Foreign Policy: A Framework for Analysis*, ed. William O. Chittick (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2006), 417.

<sup>72</sup> Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization* 42 (Summer 1988): 460.

<sup>73</sup> Peter Gourevitch, “The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics,” *International Organization* 32 (September 1978): 881; Helen Milner, *Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).



determined whether his grand strategy vision could stand up to international challenges. Whether each succeeded in implementing his grand strategy, and what this meant for U.S. foreign policy was a result of the interaction among factors at the individual, domestic, and systemic levels of analysis.

### Carter's Foreign Policy (1977-1981)

*"I am a farmer, an engineer, a father and a husband, a Christian, a politician and former governor, a planner, a businessman, a nuclear physicist, a naval officer, a canoeist and among other things, a lover of Bob Dylan's songs and Dylan Thomas' poetry."*

—Jimmy Carter

#### *Characterization of Foreign Policy*

Despite a number of crises that characterized his presidency Jimmy Carter attempted to implement a grand strategy—a big idea of how the U.S. should use its instruments of national power.<sup>74</sup> His grand strategy embraced moralism while rejecting isolationism.<sup>75</sup> It was based around the premise that a strong human rights policy was a crucial element in an effective war strategy, that the struggle with the Soviet Union required a moral dimension.<sup>76</sup> Upon taking office, he sought to reduce U.S. commitments abroad.<sup>77</sup> According to David Skidmore, professor of politics and international relations at Drake University, his initial grand strategy sought to: (1) restrain overall defense spending and shift priorities from strategic and developing country intervention forces to NATO forces; (2) withdraw U.S. troops from South Korea; (3) reduce U.S. arm sales and military aid abroad; (4) restrict Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) covert actions; and (5) avoid military entanglements in peripheral regions and concentrate on key areas. He hoped to build support for his grand strategy by replacing America's policy of reactive containment with one based on human rights.<sup>78</sup> Before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, he

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<sup>74</sup> Rosa Brooks.

<sup>75</sup> Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 7.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>77</sup> "The Hegemonic Period: 1942-Present," in *American Foreign Policy: A Framework for Analysis*, ed. William O. Chittick (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2006), 149.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

attempted to implement his grand strategy in the form of a worldwide campaign for human rights, an initiative steeped in Wilsonian idealism.<sup>79</sup>

In contrast, the Carter Doctrine, put in place after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, did not fall in line with this earlier declared policy of restraint.<sup>80</sup> With the establishment of the Carter Doctrine, Carter's grand strategy underwent a dramatic shift in response to global realities. His revised grand strategy was more pragmatic, but at the end of the day it was still wrapped in moral character.<sup>81</sup> Even his adjusted strategy placed less emphasis on security than those of his predecessors and more on promoting human rights to various actors, including both allies and non-allies in the international system.

Insight into the outcome of Carter's attempt at grand strategy implementation can be found at the individual, domestic, and systemic levels of analysis. At the individual level, analysis of Carter's operational code is critical to understanding his grand strategy, as the former fed directly into the latter, coloring its relative strengths and weaknesses. Such an analysis indicates that his vision of the political universe was initially one of cooperation and of optimism regarding the realization of his goals. During the fourth year of his presidency, however, his view of the political universe became more conflictual and his operational code underwent a drastic shift in response to international events; his grand strategy adjusted accordingly. He created additional challenges at the individual level in the form of his selection and management of foreign policy advisors, factors that affected his options for grand strategy implementation at the domestic and systemic levels.

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<sup>79</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 53.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>81</sup> "The Hegemonic Period: 1942-Present," 149.

At the domestic level, Carter faced a number of factors that served as checks on his attempt at grand strategy implementation. Based on the five-prong test for evaluating domestic factors, he was confronted with: (1) strained relationships among his foreign policy advisors; (2) a non-permissive Congress; (3) diminished presidential power in the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate; (4) poor public opinion; and (5) a flagging domestic economy. These domestic factors are connected to those at the individual level of analysis in that they impacted his foreign policy decisions. They are also interrelated with those at the systemic level because they impacted how effectively he could respond to international events.

At the systemic level, Carter faced the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the energy crisis, and the Iran hostage crisis, a series of events that tested the outcome of his grand strategy. Although he shifted his grand strategy in a conflictual direction, domestic factors impeded the implementation of both his original grand strategy and his revised one. The swing in his grand strategy is evidence in and of itself of the failure of his initial strategy; he would not have felt the need to adjust his approach had it been adequate. He also failed to implement his modified grand strategy, as he did too little and was too late in recrafting his grand strategy upon realizing that his original one was inadequate for dealing with global realities. These systemic factors are connected to those at the individual level of analysis in that they caused a shift in his operational code. They are also interrelated with those at the domestic level because they exacerbated many challenges that he faced domestically. Based on the two prong test for assessing grand strategy success, he: (1) failed to implement policies that aligned closely with his grand strategy; and (2) when he did implement policies that aligned with his grand strategy, they were often failures. Carter had an overall nonpermissive package: his worldview, partnered with domestic constraints

impeded his ability to respond effectively to international events. Thus, he failed both in terms of grand strategy implementation and success.

### *Individual Level of Analysis*

In examining the conditions under which an individual can implement a grand strategy, consideration of operational code is of critical importance, as grand strategy and operational code overlap significantly.<sup>82</sup> In a study of Carter's operational code, Stephen G. Walker, Mark Schafer, and Michael G. Young examined a collection of twenty-two of his speeches that dealt with foreign policy issues, specifically U.S.-Soviet relations and human rights.<sup>83</sup> In analyzing these speeches, it is clear that his vision is one of cooperation among various actors in the political universe and of optimism regarding the realization of his political goals.<sup>84</sup> Further, because he saw the political universe as somewhat unpredictable due to its complex interdependence, he attributed a high value to the role of chance despite his relatively strong belief in his ability to control historical developments.<sup>85</sup> His worldview was characterized by a relatively risk averse orientation and a low propensity to shift his strategy and tactics.<sup>86</sup>

Overall, Carter viewed his relationships in the political universe as mutually cooperative, though he believed himself to be somewhat more cooperative than others in the political universe. As a cooperative moralist, he had a tendency to use positive rather than negative sanctions as a means of exercising power. Accordingly, he preferred promises and rewards to

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<sup>82</sup> Stephen G. Walker et al., "Systematic Procedures for Operational Code Analysis: Measuring and Modeling Jimmy Carter's Operational Code," *International Studies Quarterly* 42 (1998): 175.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 182-3.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 184.

punishments and threats in dealing with political actors.<sup>87</sup> His religious background, specifically his evangelism, was an influential factor in the formation of his operational code.<sup>88</sup> His Christian upbringing led him toward a belief that humanity is capable of redemption and that all things are possible with God.<sup>89</sup> From this foundation came a passion for social justice and a moral sense of responsibility.<sup>90</sup>

Evidence of Carter's operational code, particularly his tendency toward cooperation, can be found in his willingness to extend respect to even the most objectionable leaders, a tactic that drew harsh criticism of him as naïve and ill-equipped to deal with sensitive political negotiations.<sup>91</sup> Evidence of his optimism about his prospects of realizing his political values can be seen in his strong orientation, from childhood, toward self-improvement and goal achievement.<sup>92</sup> For example, he pursued his goal of entering the U.S. Naval Academy by meticulously planning his time and activities to facilitate his success. The assessment that he had a fairly strong belief that he could affect historical developments was reflected in his extreme levels of confidence, sometimes characterized as arrogance.<sup>93</sup> His view of the political stage through the lens of complex interdependence is evidenced by his relations with a wide range of actors.<sup>94</sup> His behavioral orientation toward promises and rewards over threats and punishments was displayed in the priority he placed on expediting the cessation of human rights abuses and

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<sup>87</sup> Walker (1998), 184.

<sup>88</sup> D. Jason Berggren and Nicole C. Rae, "Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush: Faith, Foreign Policy, and an Evangelical Presidential Style," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36 (2006): 607.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>91</sup> Wendy N. Lords, "Forging Ahead: Assessing the Sustainability of the Carter Center in a Post-Carter Era" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2009): 30.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 34.

other suffering, not judging the relative guilt of either side in a conflict.<sup>95</sup> As a result, he was accused by some of pursuing peace at any price and conceding to dictators in the interest of ending hostilities.<sup>96</sup>

The above-established profile of Carter's operational code was valid for the first three years of his presidency.<sup>97</sup> However, during his fourth year in office, it underwent a significant shift, as he realized that his original strategy was insufficient for dealing with catalyzing events such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iran hostage crisis.<sup>98</sup> In response, his cooperative view of the political universe decreased significantly in a conflictual direction, accompanied by a shift toward less optimism in his prospects for realizing his political values.<sup>99</sup>

On top of Carter's operational code, his advisor selection and management style were additional factors at the individual level that affected the outcome of his grand strategy. His foreign policy team was a mixture of conventional and creative choices.<sup>100</sup> For secretary of state, he selected Cyrus Vance, a lawyer with experience in the Defense Department during the Kennedy and Johnson years. For secretary of defense, he selected Harold Brown, a scientist by training and an expert in military technology.<sup>101</sup> His designation of Zbigniew Brzezinski as National Security Advisor (NSA), which came before he named Vance his secretary of state, reaffirmed his determination to exercise control over foreign policy.<sup>102</sup> With the assistance of Brzezinski, he sought to construct an NSC system that would avoid concentrating power in the

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Walker (1998), 184.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Robert A. Strong, *Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 10.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 343.

hands of one individual, while preserving the role of the White House in overseeing the foreign policy bureaucracy.<sup>103</sup> Thus, he developed a new system, which was based on two committees: a Policy Review Committee (PRC) and a Special Coordinating Committee (SCC), with the former responsible for projects in the short-term and the latter responsible for those in the long-term.<sup>104</sup>

Carter's options for grand strategy implementation at the domestic and systemic levels were impacted not only by his selection of foreign policy advisors, but also by the manner in which he oversaw them. On the whole, he was an ineffective leader and communicator; these traits were rooted less in his operational code and more in his personal characteristics. His inability to develop effective, managerial relationships with his foreign policy advisors and Democratic congressional leaders contributed to a loss of popular support and a widespread perception that he was a bad leader.<sup>105</sup> While his proclivity to reduce issues to what he perceived to be their component parts served him well in the Camp David negotiations, for example, it was ill suited for directing his administration.<sup>106</sup> In this regard, his prime failure, in terms of both leadership and communication, was his "Crisis of Confidence" speech and his subsequent botched cabinet reshuffle, through which he attempted to assert executive supremacy and employ moral leadership. However, these efforts only furthered his image as a naïve, idealistic president who lacked authority and political clout.

### *Domestic Level of Analysis*

Carter also faced domestic factors that affected how successful he could be in achieving his foreign policy goals, tensions among his foreign policy advisors being one of them. His

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 343-4.

<sup>105</sup> Ronald W. Cox, *Corporate Power and Globalization in U.S. Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge, 2012), 92.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.



DMU initially consisted of Brzezinski, Vance, Brown, and UN Ambassador Andrew Young, but Brzezinski soon emerged as Carter's pivotal advisor.<sup>107</sup> However, by the second half of his term, fundamental conflict had emerged between Brzezinski and Vance. Brzezinski, on the one hand, stressed a hard-line posture toward the Soviet Union. Vance, on the other, stressed détente. Carter was unable to reconcile the opposing viewpoints of his principal foreign policy advisors. The tension, however, was nullified when Vance resigned in spring 1980 in protest of the administration's failed rescue of U.S. hostages in Iran, the first time in sixty years a secretary of state had quit because of a policy dispute with the president. Carter named Senator Edmund S. Muskie as Vance's successor.<sup>108</sup>

Tensions between Carter's foreign policy advisors fed into his increasingly negative public perception, another domestic factor that affected how successful he could be in achieving his foreign policy goals. Notably, the U.S. public found fault with his critiques of foreign leaders on human rights grounds, which were viewed as counterproductive—though the criticisms may have been deserved—because some of the officials he criticized were from countries that supported the U.S., such as Iran, South Korea, Argentina, the Philippines, and Nicaragua.<sup>109</sup> Additionally, despite the fact that the president has great incentives to be pro-Israel, Carter's stances on several issues led to a widespread perception that he was anti-Israel.<sup>110</sup> The defection of Jewish voters, a traditionally key constituency, from the Democratic Party

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<sup>107</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 344.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> “The Hegemonic Period: 1942-Present,” 150.

<sup>110</sup> David M. Paul and Rachel Anderson Paul, *Ethnic Lobbies & U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2009), 213.

contributed to his increasingly poor public image.<sup>111</sup> The widespread belief that he had allowed the Soviets to gain an advantage in the Cold War was another vulnerability.<sup>112</sup> The public criticism that Carter experienced served as a check on his grand strategy and contributed to the increasing delegitimization of him and his policies.

Carter's inability to get some of his policies, particularly his defense programs and treaties, passed by Congress affected how successful he could be in achieving his foreign policy goals. Some of the major issues that caused friction between him and Congress were aid to Nicaragua, Israel, and Egypt; the Panama Canal; arms sales in the Middle East; the second round of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II); and Communist China.<sup>113</sup> However, Carter did manage to procure the aid—totaling more than \$4.8 billion in grants, arms credits, and military assistance—from Congress that allowed him to negotiate the Camp David Accords.<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, he only succeeded in implementing the Panama Canal Treaty after accepting amendments, imposed by Congress, stipulating that additional talks be held with the country.<sup>115</sup> Congress also blocked the passage of the SALT II treaty, which sought to curtail the manufacture of strategic nuclear weapons and was eventually withdrawn in 1980.<sup>116</sup>

Ironically, the Carter administration hindered its own attempt at grand strategy implementation when it undercut its relationship with Congress by arguing against congressional

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> “Pluralism: Organized Pressure,” in *American Foreign Policy: A Framework for Analysis*, ed. William O. Chittick (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2006), 469.

<sup>113</sup> Barbara Hinckley, *Less Than Meets the Eye* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 41; James M. Lindsay, *Congress and the Politics of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 157.

<sup>114</sup> Hinckley, 41.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

human rights efforts.<sup>117</sup> First, legislation crafted by the House Foreign Affairs Committee recommended that he deny aid to nations imprisoning their own citizens for political purposes.<sup>118</sup> Later, in 1977, Congress put a stipulation in the economic-assistance bill that food aid would be withheld from nations violating human rights unless the president deemed that it would directly benefit the needy.<sup>119</sup> And the legislative body, continuing to push the hot-button human rights issue, put a clause in the 1978 economic-assistance bill that cut security aid to countries demonstrating ongoing violations of human rights unless the president determined that extenuating circumstances required it.<sup>120</sup> For a variety of reasons, the administration was not fully supportive of these provisions. This fueled tensions between Congress and the White House, as congressional leaders accused Carter of being all talk, no action on the human rights issue.<sup>121</sup>

Party politics also came into play in Carter's relationship with Congress and served as another check on his attempt at grand strategy implementation. Although Democrats controlled both houses of Congress during his presidency, congressional leadership often failed to work with him. When he attempted to repair his relationships with Democratic congressional leaders 18-months to two years into his term, his efforts were largely unsuccessful.<sup>122</sup> Although he was a Democrat, his party alignment was never fully clear, as he sometimes supported Republican policies, prompting some within his own party to accuse him of "singing the Republicans'

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<sup>117</sup> Hinckley, 139-40.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 140-1.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>122</sup> Harvey G. Zeidenstein, "Presidential Popularity and Presidential Support in Congress: Eisenhower to Carter," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 10 (Spring 1980): 231-2.

song.”<sup>123</sup> On the other side of the aisle, he received slightly higher than expected, though not overwhelming support from Republicans in Congress.<sup>124</sup> Overall, although he received more support than expected from Republicans, he received less than expected from Democrats, which hindered his ability to put his grand strategy in place.

All in all, Carter faced tensions among his foreign policy advisors, an uncooperative Congress, a weak presidency, poor public opinion, and a weak economy, a set of factors that are likely to inhibit a president’s attempt at grand strategy implementation. In the case of his presidency, because of his own personal weaknesses, he was unable to overcome these challenges. This ultimately inhibited his ability to implement a grand strategy. Notably, his failure to form effective relationships with congressional leaders contributed a lack of support for the SALT II treaty, which effectively neutralized his attempts to extend the scope of existing agreements between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.<sup>125</sup> On this and other issues, Carter’s personal qualities exacerbated the domestic constraints that he faced, resulting in his failed attempt at grand strategy implementation.

### *Systemic Level of Analysis*

As demonstrated, Carter’s personal political style and belief system worsened problems caused by an unfriendly Congress and an increasingly disenchanted public. These factors impeded his attempt at grand strategy implementation in light of international events. At the systemic level, he faced or initiated several significant events that tested whether his grand strategy would allow him to navigate international challenges: the Panama Canal Treaty (1977),

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>124</sup> Richard Fleisher and Jon R. Bond, “Assessing Presidential Support in the House: Lessons from Reagan and Carter,” *The Journal of Politics* 45 (August 1983): 752-3.

<sup>125</sup> Dennis M. Foster, “An ‘Invitation to Struggle’? The Use of Force Against ‘Legislatively Vulnerable’ American Presidents,” *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (2006): 428.

the Camp David Accords (1978), SALT II (1979), the Iran hostage crisis (1979-81), the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979), and the energy crisis (1977-9). These events dominated his presidency. Focusing on the latter three events—the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the energy crisis, and the Iran hostage crisis—provide evidence as to how his grand strategy was filtered through the individual and domestic levels of analysis. The goal of this analysis is to determine under what conditions a president can implement a grand strategy given the nature of domestic and international opportunities and constraints, and what the implications of doing so are for U.S. foreign policy. To address this question, the previously established five-prong test for assessing key domestic factors that affect grand strategy implementation and the two-prong test for measuring success at grand strategy implementation and the will be employed.

### *Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*

Challenges stemming from tensions among Carter's national security advisors, poor public opinion, and an impermissive Congress were brought to the surface when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on Christmas Eve 1980.<sup>126</sup> On December 27, Soviet troops attacked Darulaman Palace, killing Afghan President Amin and his security forces. That same day, the Soviets seized most of the Afghan central government facilities. They subsequently replaced Amin with Babrak Karmal, a relatively unknown Afghan politician who attempted to establish a Soviet puppet state in the country.<sup>127</sup> Strategically, the Soviets' timing of the invasion to coincide with Christmas caught the U.S. off guard and ensured a delayed reaction.<sup>128</sup> The Soviet-installed Karmal government was highly illegitimate.<sup>129</sup> Thus, the United Nations General Assembly

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<sup>126</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 53; Joseph J. Collins, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: A Study in the Use of Force in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1986), 77.

<sup>127</sup> Collins, 78.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 82.

(UNGA) voted 104 to 18 to deplore the armed intervention in Afghanistan.<sup>130</sup> Without explicitly naming the Soviets, the UNGA called for the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of foreign troops from the country.<sup>131</sup>

Carter also initiated a unilateral U.S. response to the invasion. He declared that “Soviet aggression in Afghanistan—unless checked—confront[ed] all the world with the most serious strategic challenge since the Cold War began.”<sup>132</sup> He announced a number of anti-Soviet measures including: (1) blocking the export of 17 million metric tons of grain; (2) stopping the sale of computers and high-technology equipment to the Soviets; (3) reducing the allowable catch of the Soviet fishing fleet in U.S. waters from 350,000 tons to 75,000 tons; (4) delaying the opening of the new Soviet consulate in New York; (5) postponing a renegotiation of the cultural agreement that was under consideration; and (6) boycotting the Moscow Olympics.<sup>133</sup> The grain embargo was particularly contentious, for the impact it had on both the U.S. and the global economies, though it was successful in achieving its goal of imposing a heavy price for Soviet aggression.<sup>134</sup> He also withdrew the SALT II treaty from consideration by the Senate and announced the Carter Doctrine: “An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the U.S. And such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”<sup>135</sup>

Despite these measures, Carter failed to decisively push the Soviets out of Afghanistan. This failure was due largely to him being overwhelmed by a number of other pressing

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Collins, 87.

<sup>133</sup> Jimmy Carter, “State of the Union Address 1980” (speech, Washington, DC, January 23, 1980), Jimmy Carter Library and Museum, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/speeches/su80jec.phtml>.

<sup>134</sup> Collins, 88.

<sup>135</sup> Jimmy Carter, “State of the Union Address 1980”; Collins, 89.

international events. His failure can also be traced to his operational code and grand strategy. Although they had become more aggressive in response to the invasion, the policies he put in place never lived up to the aggrandized threats he made towards the Soviets. His failure to achieve success in the invasion cost him public opinion and demonstrated the failed outcome of his grand strategy at the international level.

### *Energy Crisis*

Before Carter could deal fully with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, he was forced to turn his attention to the energy crisis, which served as another test of his grand strategy at the systemic level. Although energy issues had played a minimal role in his presidential campaign, upon taking office, he promptly turned his attention to the crisis.<sup>136</sup> At the most basic level, it was caused by a shortage of natural gas combined with severely cold temperatures, and it was worsened by instability in the Middle East.<sup>137</sup> Riots in Iran in fall 1978 had led Iranian oil workers to strike, bringing oil exports to a freeze. Although other Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) nations, namely Saudi Arabia, had begun to produce more oil to make up for the loss, increased consumption in the industrialized countries had led to a global scarcity. These issues were exacerbated when OPEC's attempts to regulate oil supplies fell through, causing prices to spiral even higher.<sup>138</sup>

In response, Carter persuaded Congress to enact an emergency natural gas bill; he then turned to long-term solutions.<sup>139</sup> First, in February 1977, he announced that he intended to put comprehensive energy legislation in place. He then appointed James Schlesinger, former

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<sup>136</sup> Daniel Horowitz, *Jimmy Carter and the Energy Crisis of the 1970s: The 'Crisis of Confidence' Speech of July 15, 1979* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005), 11.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 11-2.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Horowitz, 11.

secretary of defense, as energy czar, and promised that he would produce a National Energy Plan (NEP) within ninety days.<sup>140</sup> In August, Carter created the Department of Energy and appointed Schlesinger the first secretary of the Department.<sup>141</sup> Then Carter deregulated energy prices, allowing U.S. prices to rise to world levels.<sup>142</sup> He also put a windfall profits tax, a levy on sudden increases in earnings, in place, the profits from which would be used to finance alternative energy sources.<sup>143</sup>

In an effort to garner support for his energy policies, Carter delivered his “Crisis of Confidence” speech, officially titled “Energy and National Goals,” on July 15, 1979.<sup>144</sup> His remarks, influenced by his evangelical religious convictions, chastised Americans for their extravagant consumption habits.<sup>145</sup> “Too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption,” he observed.<sup>146</sup> “Americans,” he concluded, “had learned that piling up material goods [could not] fill the emptiness of lives which [had] no confidence or purpose.”<sup>147</sup> His risky speech paid off; it received a largely positive reception from the American public.

Two days later, Carter undertook a significant restructuring of his administration. With the goal of restoring an image of command and control to the chief executive, he asked his cabinet and all senior members of his staff to offer their resignations.<sup>148</sup> He then fired Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) Joseph Califano and accepted the resignations of Secretary of Treasury Michael Blumenthal, Secretary of Energy James Schlesinger, and Attorney

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 11-2.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 12-3.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>144</sup> Horowitz, vii, 13.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 13-4.

<sup>146</sup> Horowitz, 25.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Robert McGeehan, “Carter’s Crises: Iran, Afghanistan, and Presidential Politics,” *The World Today* 36 (May 1980): 163.



General Griffin Bell.<sup>149</sup> He selected Patricia Roberts Harris, his secretary of housing and urban development (HUD), to replace Califano.<sup>150</sup> He appointed George William Miller, former chairman of the Federal Reserve, as his new secretary of treasury and Charles William Duncan, Jr. as his new secretary of energy. For attorney general, he replaced Bell with Benjamin Richard Civiletti.<sup>151</sup> Carter's cabinet reshuffle represented both a bid to reassert executive supremacy and an attempt to win key constituency groups, particularly the southern states, in the lead up to the 1980 election. This strategy backfired, however, as his decision to dismiss a number of his cabinet members was widely seen as a rash act of desperation. Thus, although his "Crisis of Confidence" speech had been well received, as a result of the clumsy reshuffle, his approval ratings had reached a new low by the end of July.<sup>152</sup> Overall, this episode reveals his tendency to react to crises with soaring, moralistic rhetoric. It also reveals his penchant for giving suggestions to the American people, which often came across as naïve and idealistic. His reaction to this event was rooted in his revised operational code and grand strategy, based upon which he attempted to come up with decisive solutions to crises, though, as in this case, he often fell into the trap of doing too little, too late.

### *Iran Hostage Crisis*

Carter was faced with another jarring systemic level event that tested the outcome of his grand strategy when demonstrations broke out in Iran, one of the United States' strongest allies in the Middle East. Throughout his first year in office, he had been a steadfast supporter of the

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>150</sup> "Cabinet Officers in the Carter Administration," Jimmy Carter Library & Museum, last modified March 26, 2010, accessed April 12, 2013, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/jec/cabinet.phtml>.

<sup>151</sup> Horowitz, 26.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 27.

Shah.<sup>153</sup> By early 1978, however, there was evidence that opposition to the Shah's regime was spreading, and that his overthrow was a serious possibility.<sup>154</sup> As a result, on November 9, the U.S. Ambassador to Iran suggested that the U.S. look for measures of maintaining its interests in Iran, in case the Shah's regime should be overthrown.<sup>155</sup>

These warnings came to fruition on December 29, when the Shah announced his selection of Shahpour Bakhtiar as Prime Minister.<sup>156</sup> As a condition of taking office, Bakhtiar stipulated that the Shah should leave the country.<sup>157</sup> Thus, on January 16, 1979, the Shah left Iran for Egypt, insisting that that Iranian people would call him back to rule.<sup>158</sup> Then, on February 1, Ayatollah Khomeini appointed Mehdi Bazargan as Prime Minister.<sup>159</sup> When the Shah got cancer in October, Carter made the critical decision to let him come to the U.S. for medical treatment.<sup>160</sup> It was ultimately this decision that allowed for the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.<sup>161</sup> On November 4, it was attacked and captured by a mob of militant demonstrators.<sup>162</sup> Consequently, sixty-three American officials were left at the mercy of this small group of militants, who suddenly found themselves at the center of the world political arena.<sup>163</sup> Carter's first decisive policy decision was to prohibit U.S. companies from buying oil from Iran; a week later, he broadened the scope of the restriction to include imports and exports of other products from the

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<sup>153</sup> Seyom Brown, *The Faces of Power: Constancy and Change in United States Foreign Policy from Truman to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 451.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 511.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Brown, 512.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 513.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 514.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 515.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 516.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 520.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 521.

country.<sup>164</sup> He then announced the most severe economic sanction, a freeze on Iranian assets on deposit in U.S. banks.<sup>165</sup>

In calculating a response to the crisis, Carter placed a high value on protecting the lives of the hostages.<sup>166</sup> He succeeded in getting thirteen of them released—the women and the blacks of the group—on November 19.<sup>167</sup> Subsequently, on April 7, 1980 the U.S. formally broke diplomatic relations with Iran, and on April 17 he announced a ban on all exports to the country and the U.S. government's seizure of the Iranian assets frozen in U.S. banks.<sup>168</sup> With tensions mounting, he decided to go forward with a helicopter rescue of the hostages.<sup>169</sup> The mission, which was undertaken on April 24, had to be aborted early, however, after three of the helicopters malfunctioned; receiving this information, he had no choice but to call off the attempt.<sup>170</sup> Then, one of the helicopters crashed into an aircraft when it was refueling for its flight home, tragically killing eight Americans.<sup>171</sup> By early September, Iran's interest in the hostages had significantly diminished.<sup>172</sup> Thus, on January 20, 1981, Iran and the U.S. reached an agreement in which the U.S. gave Iran approximately \$8 billion, and the exchange of fifty-two hostages for cash took place just after noon—the same day that Reagan was sworn into office.<sup>173</sup>

The Iran hostage crisis had been a decisive failure for Carter's grand strategy. During the crisis, which lasted for 444 days, he was overloaded with Panama Canal treaties in the Senate,

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 523.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Brown, 520.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 524.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 529.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 529-531.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 531-2.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 533.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 534.

the post-Camp David negotiations, talks with China, and the continuing SALT discussions.<sup>174</sup>

Nonetheless, he felt the plight of the hostages deeply. Thus, he worked with key advisors through the last night of his presidency, desperately trying to bring about the hostages' release before Reagan was sworn in.<sup>175</sup> Despite the fact that he had agreed not to campaign until the hostages were rescued, the 1980 election was clearly on his mind.<sup>176</sup>

Before attempting to rescue the hostages militarily, Carter tried to resolve the crisis diplomatically. Overall, his decision making during the crisis was defined by a failure to take timely, decisive action.<sup>177</sup> Thus, by the time he settled on a helicopter rescue mission, the hostages had already been in custody for more than a year, a long national nightmare. At this point in his presidency, he also faced increasingly poor public opinion and worsening relationships with Congress. His delay in undertaking a military rescue was rooted in his operational code and grand strategy, which guided his inaction. Although they had shifted to become more hawkish in nature, he still preferred diplomatic solutions to military ones. Nevertheless, his prolonged inaction, followed by the failed hostage rescue mission, cost him public support and demonstrated the failed outcome of his grand strategy at the international level.

As demonstrated, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the energy crisis, and the Iran hostage crisis challenged Carter's core beliefs, prompting him to adjust his operational code and

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<sup>174</sup> Erwin C. Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 137.

<sup>175</sup> Ted Koppel, "30 Years After the Iran Hostage Crisis, We're Still Fighting Reagan's War," *Washington Post*, January 21, 2011, accessed April 17, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2011/01/21/AR2011012102914.html>.

<sup>176</sup> "Iran Hostage Crisis," Miller Center, last modified March 25, 2009, accessed April 17, 2013, <http://millercenter.org/newsroom/news/iran>.

<sup>177</sup> "Governmental Politics Model: The President and His Advisors," in *American Foreign Policy: A Framework for Analysis*, ed. William O. Chittick (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2006), 403.

grand strategy. These systemic level tests existed on top of the individual and domestic level challenges that he faced. Further, these events proved impossible to resolve in light of his inability to navigate domestic politics effectively, highlighting the idealism of his grand strategy. His failure to come to a timely, decisive solution in response to the Soviet invasion, the energy crisis, and the Iran hostage crisis speaks to the inability of his grand strategy, which had been filtered through the factors at the individual and domestic levels, to stand up to the tests of the global system.

### *Assessment of Grand Strategy*

Ultimately, the American public did not understand the linkage between Carter's efforts to limit U.S. commitments abroad and the ethical rhetoric of his foreign policy.<sup>178</sup> As a result, he was forced to moderate his original absolutist human rights grand strategy in favor of a more hawkish approach. Comparing his key decisions in dealing with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the energy crisis, and the Iran hostage crisis provides evidence of this. Whereas his initial operational code and grand strategy were highly cooperative in nature, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, he was not afraid to take decisive action to address Soviet encroachment and other systemic challenges. Upon realizing that his initial grand strategy was inappropriate for dealing with global realities, his grand strategy, though still rooted in the human rights paradigm, became more security-focused. However, his attempt to implement a modified grand strategy also backfired, as Congress and the American public saw many of his later decisions as rash. They also continued to hold him to the standards established by the soaring human rights rhetoric of his original strategy, even after it had shifted.

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<sup>178</sup> "The Hegemonic Period: 1942-Present," 149-50.

While the roots of Carter's inability to implement a grand strategy can be traced to his operational code, failure must also be ascribed to the domestic and systemic variables that hindered his success. The systemic events he faced represented the culmination of a series of political and economic catastrophes that began in the mid-1960s.<sup>179</sup> At the domestic level, he faced conflicts within his own administration, an uncooperative, though Democratically-controlled Congress, diminished presidential power, low public approval, and a weak economy that hindered his ability to prepare for and respond to these challenges. The hostage crisis and other failures at the international level eroded domestic public support for his grand strategy and ultimately destroyed any hope he had of winning the 1980 election.

In assessing Carter's presidency according to the earlier established five-prong test for evaluating domestic factors, he faced: (1) tensions among his foreign policy advisors; (2) a Democratically-controlled Congress in all but the final year of his presidency; (3) an institutionally weak presidency as a result of Watergate and Vietnam; (4) widespread public disapproval; and (5) a weak domestic economy and rising oil prices. Overall, this assessment demonstrates that the domestic factors critical to grand strategy implementation were almost all working against Carter; any potential benefits to be reaped from working with a Democratically-controlled Congress—the only significant factor that could have worked in his favor—were mitigated by his poor relationships with congressional leaders.

Based on the two-prong test for determining whether a president has succeeded in grand strategy implementation: (1) U.S. foreign policy during Carter's presidency rarely aligned with his grand strategy; and (2) when he did manage to put policies in place that aligned with his grand strategy, their outcomes were rarely positive. Thus, his attempt at grand strategy

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<sup>179</sup> Horowitz, 2-3.

implementation was a failure on both counts. In fact, from his failed rescue of the Iran hostages to his battles with Congress, nearly his entire policy record is a failure, with the exclusion of the Camp David Accords, his only major foreign policy achievement. Carter's failure can be explained by a set of interconnected factors at the individual, domestic, and system levels of analysis that impacted each other, and ultimately blocked his attempt at grand strategy implementation.

Carter's loss to Ronald Reagan in 1980 underscored his failed grand strategy and his position as one of the least effective and least popular presidents in U.S. history. Although he came into office with a clear grand strategy vision, both his original strategy and his revised one fell victim to individual, domestic, and systemic realities. His administration serves as a case study of the conditions that make it impossible for a president to put a grand strategy in place: lack of an easily implemented idea; an impermissive domestic environment rooted in presidential unpopularity, poor leadership, and partisan opposition; and international reaction rather than leadership.

### **Bush's Foreign Policy (2001-2008)**

*"I'm the decider, and I decide what is best."*

—George W. Bush

#### *Characterization of Foreign Policy*

George W. Bush formally unveiled his grand strategy—the Bush Doctrine—in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. The day of the attacks represented a turning point for Bush, who was forced to turn his focus to international concerns. In their aftermath, he transitioned from a domestically oriented president who had undertaken education and Social Security reform early in his first term, to a war president with an explicit grand strategy. Bush's grand strategy covered all aspects of foreign policy and reflected his view of what U.S. foreign policy should achieve.<sup>180</sup> Two elements—American primacy and preemptive war—captured the essential ends and means, respectively, of the Bush Doctrine. The first, American primacy, viewed the political universe as unipolar, with the U.S. possessing the right and responsibility to serve as the hegemon.<sup>181</sup> The second, preemptive war, advocated for striking first against enemies determined to inflict harm on the U.S.<sup>182</sup>

At its core, the Bush Doctrine sought to give the public a clear sense of the threats to the U.S.<sup>183</sup> It eschewed environmentalism, national building, and negotiations in favor of crisis diplomacy. It redefined military threats by emphasizing just three states—Iran, Iraq, and North Korea—whose efforts to attain nuclear weapons constituted an axis of evil.<sup>184</sup> Rooted in

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<sup>180</sup> Rosa Brooks.

<sup>181</sup> Steven W. Hook and John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2004), 349.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 349-50.

<sup>183</sup> Lee Ann Pingel, "Security Policy: International Terrorism, Nuclear Weapons, and Instability in Developing Countries," in *American Foreign Policy: A Framework for Analysis*, ed. William O. Chittick (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2006), 204.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*



neoconservatism, Bush's grand strategy sought to achieve global democratization via military unilateralism.<sup>185</sup> According to P. Edward Haley, professor of international relations at Claremont McKenna College, what is different about Bush's foreign policy record is that unlike his predecessors, who treated the concepts of preventive war and democracy promotion as boilerplate rhetoric, he acted on these concepts.<sup>186</sup> Accordingly, he was not afraid to show contempt for traditional U.S. allies, flout international opinion, and bypass multilateral institutions to act on his sense of intuitive moralist activism.<sup>187</sup> Overall, Bush's grand strategy was aggressive, hegemonic, and preemptive in nature, and it advocated for the restoration of security.<sup>188</sup>

Insight into the outcome of Bush's attempt at grand strategy implementation can be found at the individual, domestic and systemic levels of analysis. At the individual level, examination of Bush's operational code is crucial to understanding his grand strategy, as his grand strategy was directly impacted by his operational code. Such an examination shows that his original operational code was fairly cooperative. However, following the September 11 attacks, the negative, conflictual elements of his worldview became significantly more pronounced. His grand strategy was a product of the attacks, prior to which he possessed a set of beliefs about the international system, but not a grand strategy. Also at the individual level, his selection and management of foreign policy advisors affected his options for grand strategy implementation at the domestic and systemic levels.

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<sup>185</sup> Haley, 4.

<sup>186</sup> Drezner, 2.

<sup>187</sup> Haley, 3, 135; Drezner, 4.

<sup>188</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, "Grand Strategy in the Second Term," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2005).

At the domestic level, Bush faced a number of factors that facilitated his attempt at grand strategy implementation. Based on the five-prong test for assessing domestic factors, he was confronted with: (1) a divided, decentralized foreign policy team; (2) a highly permissive Congress; (3) increased presidential power in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks; (4) positive public opinion; and (5) a strong domestic economy. These domestic factors are connected to those at the individual level in that they impacted his foreign policy decisions. They are also interrelated with those at the systemic level because they impacted how effectively he could respond to international events.

At the systemic level, Bush faced the September 11 attacks and initiated the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, a series of events that caused him to develop a grand strategy and then tested its outcome. These systemic tests are connected to factors at the individual level in that they caused a shift in his operational code. They are also interrelated with those at the domestic level because they capitalized on a permissive domestic environment. Based on the two-prong test for evaluating grand strategy success, he: (1) successfully implemented policies that aligned with his grand strategy; and (2) when he implemented policies that aligned with his grand strategy, often had negative outcomes. He had an overall permissive package: his worldview, which developed into a grand strategy, partnered with domestic opportunities, facilitated his ability to respond effectively to international events. Ultimately, though, while he passed the test for successful grand strategy implementation, his grand strategy was not successful in that it damaged the global standing of the U.S.

### *Individual Level of Analysis*

Understanding Bush's operational code is critical to comprehending his grand strategy, as the two are closely connected. In a study of his operational code, Jonathan Renshon presents an

analysis for four separate phases of his political career: (1) the immediate pre-presidential phase; (2) his nine months in office prior to September 11; (3) the six months immediately following the terrorist attacks; and (4) his last year in office as a second-term president.<sup>189</sup> For his analysis, Renshon gathered content from all of Bush's public speeches that were at least 1,500 words long and focused primarily on foreign policy.<sup>190</sup> Renshon's analysis reveals that Bush initially held beliefs typical to other U.S. leaders regarding the image of the international system and the ability to realize his political values.<sup>191</sup> He also held a moderately strong, positive belief in the use of cooperation toward achieving his policy objectives. Regarding role conceptions, he saw the image of the self as more cooperative than that of the other. Hence, he saw himself as a benevolent leader in a somewhat friendly system.<sup>192</sup> During his first nine months in office, his worldview was surprisingly cooperative.<sup>193</sup> His stance toward Russia is illustrative of this; while foreign policy advisors Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and Condoleezza Rice were busy condemning Russia, Bush took a more cooperative stance. Moreover, optimism and confidence were key components of his personality. Thus, gaining more power to accomplish his goals in the form of the presidency reinforced his beliefs about the cooperative nature of the political system.<sup>194</sup>

Following the September 11 attacks, Bush's operational code changed substantially, with his view of the political universe becoming more negative.<sup>195</sup> He experienced a dramatic belief reversal, with his views on the Nature of the Political Universe, Realization of Political Values,

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<sup>189</sup> Jonathan Renshon, "Stability and Change in Belief Systems: The Operational Code of George W. Bush," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52 (2008): 820.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 833.

<sup>191</sup> Robinson, 111.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Renshon, 829.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Renshon, 111-2.

and Predictability of Political Future all changing significantly.<sup>196</sup> Additionally, he came to view the political universe as less predictable and became more pessimistic in his beliefs concerning his prospects for realizing his political goals.<sup>197</sup> On the whole, his operational code was defined by a shift in risk orientation, as he transitioned from more risk averse (as governor) to steadily more risk acceptant throughout his two administrations.<sup>198</sup>

According to an analysis by Robert Jervis, professor of politics at Columbia University, Bush was a pragmatic and consensus-minded individual who saw American leadership as restricted to defending narrow and traditional vital interests.<sup>199</sup> On a personal level, his training in the business world guided his leadership style, particularly his tendency to delegate the conduct of foreign policy to others, such as Vice President Cheney or to various cabinet officials, such as the secretaries of state and defense—a practice that earned him his nickname of the “MBA President” early in his first term.<sup>200</sup> His evangelicalism also had a significant impact on his operational code. Most famously, when asked in a candidate debate to name his favorite philosopher, he immediately answered, “Christ, because he changed my heart.”<sup>201</sup> Bush’s religiosity remained a dominant force throughout his presidency and had a strong influence on his grand strategy.<sup>202</sup>

In ascertaining how Bush formulated his grand strategy, it is important to understand the link between operational code and grand strategy. A shift in his operational code also entailed a shift in his worldview or grand strategy. His initial operational code was fairly cooperative and

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 835, 837.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 837

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Robinson, 102.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>201</sup> Mark J. Rozell, “Introduction: Religion and the Bush Presidency,” in *Religion and the Bush Presidency* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 2.

optimistic, which translated into a cooperative worldview that influenced his original foreign policy prerogatives. Yet, after the September 11 attacks, he was forced to turn his attention to international events, and his operational code shifted accordingly. This resulted in the development of a grand strategy that reflected the aggressive nature of his modified operational code. The relative strengths and weakness of the Bush Doctrine were colored by his modified operational code.

On top of Bush's operational code, his advisor selection and management style were additional factors at the individual level that affected the outcome of his grand strategy. In selecting the top three foreign policy posts in his administration, he chose from his father's generation: Dick Cheney as vice president, Donald Rumsfeld as secretary of defense, and Colin Powell as secretary of state.<sup>203</sup> All three were strong-willed, experienced, and Washington savvy.<sup>204</sup> Cheney, who had served as secretary of defense in the first Bush administration, was a staunch conservative.<sup>205</sup> Rumsfeld had been Richard Nixon's defense secretary twenty-five years earlier, and had reestablished himself through participating in various conservative study groups that had attacked Bill Clinton's policies in the 1990s.<sup>206</sup> Powell was a former NSA and head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), who had coined the Powell Doctrine: "The use of force should be restricted to occasions where it can do some good and where the good will outweigh the loss of lives and other costs that will surely ensue."<sup>207</sup> Another of Bush's key foreign policy advisors, Condoleezza Rice, had formerly served as the director of Soviet and East European Affairs on

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<sup>203</sup> Haley, 132.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 134.

Bush Sr.'s NSC.<sup>208</sup> Known for her *realpolitik* outlook, Rice was appointed by Bush Jr. as NSA. “Bush and Condoleezza Rice were an odd couple: the tightly wound, upwardly mobile, middle-class, African-American, intellectual female, and the rich, recovering alcoholic who had found religion.”<sup>209</sup> Despite their differences, the two worked well together, and after winning reelection in 2004, Bush made her his secretary of state.

Bush's options for grand strategy implementation at the domestic and systemic levels were impacted not only by his selection of foreign policy advisors, but also by the manner in which he oversaw them. He employed a management style that fit the deep divide that existed among his advisors. As such, the Bush national security team worked in a generally closed system, where information flowed within the circle, but conflicting information was only rarely allowed inside.<sup>210</sup> His insistence upon group cohesion led even those within the group—such as Powell—to censor their comments in order to remain within the inner circle.<sup>211</sup> In this way, Bush created an environment in which the preferences of the dominant in-group—the hawks—were often privileged over those of the out-group. While his grand strategy was tied to his operational code, his great reliance upon some of his foreign policy advisors mitigated the relationship between his operational code and his grand strategy. Thus, the Bush Doctrine could very well have been called the Cheney Doctrine or the Rumsfeld Doctrine, as he relied heavily upon the neoconservatives within his administration, particularly with regard to the Iraq War.

### *Domestic Level of Analysis*

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> John Davis, *The Barack Obama Presidency: A Two Year Assessment* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 25.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

Bush also faced domestic factors that affected how successful he could be in achieving his foreign policy goals, a divide among his foreign policy advisors being one of them. Early in his first term, his foreign policy advisors dubbed their team the “Vulcans,” in honor of the Roman god of fire.<sup>212</sup> With the nickname, they hoped to convey a sense of power and durability.<sup>213</sup> In reality, however, they had strong and conflicting views about what the administration’s foreign policy priorities should be.<sup>214</sup> As a result, deep differences emerged among them immediately. And because Bush had limited foreign policy experience, he often relied heavily upon them to help establish policy and to teach him about international affairs.<sup>215</sup> Thus, during the first months of his presidency, their conflicting positions paralyzed U.S. foreign policy, but for a domestically oriented president, the standstill was not necessarily a bad thing.

The divide among Bush’s advisors remained for the rest of his presidency and became a hallmark of his administration. On one side stood the neoconservatives who advocated for unilateral action, and on the other were the realists who believed that U.S. interests were best served by a policy of multilateralism.<sup>216</sup> Within the inner sphere of the DMU, there was a decider (Bush) and a highly influential codecider (Cheney)—dubbed Bush’s co-president by some.<sup>217</sup> The outer sphere of the DMU was split into a hawkish in-group dominated by Cheney and Rumsfeld and a more moderate, dovish out-group led by Powell.<sup>218</sup> After the September 11 attacks, Bush sided increasingly with the in-group—the hawks, as they are known—although he

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<sup>212</sup> James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush’s War Cabinet* (New York: Penguin Group Inc., 2004), ix-x.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>214</sup> Haley, 132.

<sup>215</sup> Robinson, 103.

<sup>216</sup> Haley, 132.

<sup>217</sup> Peleg, 105; Shirley Anne Warshaw, *The Co-Presidency of Bush and Cheney* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>218</sup> Peleg, 105.

did occasionally choose to go with the doves.<sup>219</sup> On Iraq, for example, though he initially favored Powell's multilateralist approach, the in-group later came to dominate the decision making process. As a result, he ultimately chose to undertake a military intervention. The in-group also dominated decision making regarding North Korea, Iran, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>220</sup> The policy preferences of the in-group were more closely aligned with his grand strategy than those of the out-group. Thus, particularly after his grand strategy came to fruition in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Bush relied heavily on Cheney, Rumsfeld, and other hawks in the administration.

Despite having to deal with a deeply divided foreign policy team, Bush enjoyed expanded presidential power in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, another domestic factor that affected how successful he could be in achieving his foreign policy goals. The September 11 rally effect—the sudden and substantial increase in public approval of the president that occurred in response to the attacks—permitted him to launch his War on Terrorism without delay.<sup>221</sup> In fact, the September 11 rally effect was the largest ever recorded; this is evidenced by the fact that his approval rating jumped in the Gallup poll from 51% on September 10 to 86% on September 15. Further, Bush's 90% approval rating, recorded on September 22, is the highest rating ever recorded for a U.S. president.<sup>222</sup>

Most significantly, the September 11 rally effect allowed Bush to form a new basis for U.S. foreign policy.<sup>223</sup> Nine days after the attacks, he articulated his new grand strategy and

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>220</sup> Haley, 132.

<sup>221</sup> Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson, "Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism," *Political Science and Politics* 36 (January 2003): 37.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Hook and Spanier, 348.



announced the start of the global War on Terrorism to Congress.<sup>224</sup> He further detailed his grand strategy in his 2002 State of the Union address, in which he declared that the U.S. confronted an axis of evil consisting of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea.<sup>225</sup> According to Bush, “The task before the nation went far beyond simply capturing Osama bin Laden and putting al Qaeda out of business.”<sup>226</sup> A global fight against terrorism had to be mounted on all fronts.<sup>227</sup>

The September 11 attacks allowed Bush to win not only popular support, but also congressional approval for his new foreign policy paradigm, another domestic factor that affected how successful he could be in accomplishing his foreign policy objectives. The relationship between the Bush White House and Congress exemplified the power of a commander in chief during wartime.<sup>228</sup> Overall, due largely to the rally effect and a booming national economy, he managed to get most of his foreign and defense policies passed by Congress.<sup>229</sup> Notably, less than a week after the attacks, Congress passed the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) against the terrorists, which granted him the authority to use all necessary and appropriate force against the terrorists and those who harbored or assisted them.<sup>230</sup> The measure passed by 98-0 in the Senate and 420-1 in the House of Representatives.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People” (speech, Washington, DC, September 20, 2001), The White House Archives, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

<sup>225</sup> George W. Bush, “State of the Union Address 2002” (speech, Washington, DC, January 29, 2002), The White House Archives, <http://georgewbushwhitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/2002012911.html>.

<sup>226</sup> Hook and Spanier, 349.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Carter and Scott, 43.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Authorization for Use of Military Force, S.J. Res. 23, 107<sup>th</sup> Congress (2001); Hook and Scott, 43.

<sup>231</sup> Stuart Gottlieb, “Change and Continuity in America’s Counterterrorism,” in *U.S. Foreign Policy Today: American Renewal?* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2012), 119.

Congress also passed sweeping domestic security legislation, the USA PATRIOT Act, which was signed into law on October 26, after passing 98-1 in the Senate and 356-66 in the House.<sup>232</sup> The Patriot Act lowered the threshold for antiterrorism surveillance and broke down much of the division between domestic and international intelligence gathering and between intelligence and law enforcement. The congressional support Bush received in favor of his counterterrorism policies demonstrates that he was operating in a new paradigm of presidential power, with Article II of the Constitution permitting—indeed obliging—him to do whatever he deemed necessary to protect the nation.<sup>233</sup> At the time of the attacks, Republicans controlled the House and Democrats the Senate. Despite the fact that Bush faced a divided Congress, a domestic factor that had the potential to hinder how successful he could be in achieving his foreign policy goals, the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress came together in support of most of his policies. Later, during his second term, he faced a second divided Congress, which proved less cooperative than the 107<sup>th</sup>. Thus, while Congress initially facilitated Bush's attempt at grand strategy implementation, as time went on, the legislative body made it increasingly difficult for him to implement his grand strategy.

### *Systemic Level of Analysis*

As established, Bush's political style and belief system allowed him to capitalize on a friendly Congress and a boost in public opinion. These domestic factors facilitated his attempt at grand strategy implementation in light of international events. At the systemic level, he faced the September 11 attacks (2001) and initiated the invasions of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) and the North Korean nuclear disarmament negotiations (2004), events that tested whether his

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<sup>232</sup> Gottlieb, 119.

<sup>233</sup> Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT Act) Act of 2001, 279; Gottlieb, 119.

grand strategy would allow him to navigate international challenges. Focusing on the September 11 attacks and the U.S.-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq shed light on how his responses to these events were filtered through factors at the individual and domestic levels of analysis. The goal of this analysis is to determine under what conditions a president can implement a grand strategy given the nature of domestic and international opportunities and constraints, and what the implications of doing so are for U.S. foreign policy. To address this question, the previously established two-prong test for measuring success at grand strategy implementation and the five-prong test for assessing key domestic factors that affect grand strategy implementation will be employed.

### *September 11 Attacks*

Bush's defining moment came on the morning of September 11, 2001, when nineteen terrorists turned four hijacked airliners into weapons of mass destruction. Their attacks targeted New York and Washington, DC, America's commercial and political centers, respectively.<sup>234</sup> The four jets took off over a two-hour period, two from Boston, one from Washington, and one from Newark. Each was hijacked shortly after takeoff. The first left Boston for Los Angeles but changed course toward New York City and flew into the north tower of the World Trade Center (WTC) in lower Manhattan.<sup>235</sup> Eighteen minutes later, the second plane crashed into the south tower.<sup>236</sup> Half an hour after that, the third crashed into the Pentagon. The fourth crash-landed in Pennsylvania. A total of 266 people were killed in the four planes. In the aftermath of the attacks, the world was transfixed by images of the crippled WTC. The south tower fell first, at 10:05am,

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<sup>234</sup> Hook and Spanier, 332.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 332-3.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 333.

followed by the north tower at 10:28.<sup>237</sup> That night, in a televised address to the nation, Bush declared the attacks an act of war.<sup>238</sup> In the address, he announced the widening of the U.S. response to terrorism to include not just the terrorists who had committed the attacks, but also those who had sponsored and supported them.<sup>239</sup> In the weeks and months that followed, he capitalized on the nearly unconditional support that he received from Congress and the U.S. public to implement a wide-ranging counterterrorism policy.

In a significant expansion of presidential power, Bush issued a series of Executive Orders authorizing aggressive action on a range of issues, including the creation of secret CIA prisons; the permitting of enhanced interrogations of captured terrorists; the expansion of the CIA's rendition program; a secret domestic terrorism surveillance program; a secret program to search private international banking transactions; and a directive for the U.S. military and the CIA to engage in covert targeted assassinations of terrorist leaders.<sup>240</sup> Additionally, the U.S. military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba was designated as a detention center for suspected terrorists. The administration argued that international law did not cover such detainees, as non-state, enemy combatants.<sup>241</sup> As a result of these directives, Bush has been accused of serving as an imperial president. Coined by Arthur M. Schlesinger, the term describes the gradual but significant growth in executive power.<sup>242</sup> According to some, Bush took the imperial presidency to an unprecedented level. Presidential scholar Allan Lichtman, for example, argues that he sent the

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 334.; George W. Bush, "Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation" (speech, Washington, DC, September 11, 2001), The White House Archives, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>.

<sup>239</sup> Hook and Spanier, 334.

<sup>240</sup> Gottlieb, 119.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Wittkopf and Jones, 328.

expansion of presidential power into the stratosphere.<sup>243</sup> Critics of the Bush administration contend that he overstepped his authority in invoking sweeping emergency powers in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, losing sight of civil liberties and international law in the process.

Regardless, for Bush, the attacks were a turning point that brought about a grand strategy of aggressive, preemptive unilateralism. His actions in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, namely the passage of the AUMF and the Patriot Act, were among his first significant, public actions inspired by his grand strategy. In considering whether other presidents would have taken the same actions in the aftermath of the attacks, it is clear that given their severity, both in human and economic costs and to the U.S. psyche, the attacks demanded decisive action on the part of the executive, though not necessarily the same actions that Bush took. The attacks served as a systemic level test that determined whether his grand strategy would allow him to navigate international challenges. With his revised operational code and new grand strategy as his point of reference, his immediate reaction to the attacks showed that he was willing to do whatever it would take to protect the homeland and punish those responsible.

The invasion of Afghanistan was another event that tested whether the Bush Doctrine could achieve success. Within hours of the attacks, the administration had identified al Qaeda, a global militant Islamist organization based in Afghanistan, as responsible.<sup>244</sup> Al Qaeda, like other Islamist terrorist groups, was conducting *jihad* (holy war) against the West.<sup>245</sup> Composed largely of disenchanted extremists, al Qaeda had at least sixty cells across the globe in 2001.<sup>246</sup> The group's leader, Osama bin Laden, had joined with other Islamic fundamentalists in establishing

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Hook and Spanier, 336.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 336-7.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 337.

the Taliban, a state in Afghanistan rooted in a strict interpretation of *sharia* law, which provided support and sanctuary to al Qaeda.<sup>247</sup>

In order to bring down the Taliban regime and fight a successful war against al Qaeda, the U.S. would have to abandon its traditional approaches to warfare, in which wars were won by sheer military strength.<sup>248</sup> It would have to successfully coordinate its intelligence, diplomacy, and homeland security efforts; doing so required allies to provide intelligence, military assets, and support in international organizations.<sup>249</sup> With this in mind, defense strategists devised a war plan that would involve two phases: first the U.S. and its allies would target the Taliban regime, then it would focus on al Qaeda cells in other parts of the world.<sup>250</sup> This strategy aligned closely with Bush's grand strategy, particularly its emphasis on the right of the U.S., as the global hegemon, to wage preemptive war on threats to its national security.

Accordingly, American and British bombing raids began in October.<sup>251</sup> They successfully disabled the Taliban's transportation and communications infrastructure.<sup>252</sup> As a result, on November 12, Kabul fell into the hands of the U.S. military, and an interim government and peacekeeping force were established.<sup>253</sup> A new innovation in military technology, unmanned intelligence and attack drones, aided the bombing campaign.<sup>254</sup> An estimated 15,000 enemy troops were killed in the fighting, and approximately 7,000 others were sent to Guantanamo Bay.<sup>255</sup> In the second phase of the war, Bush undertook the task of bringing

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 337-9.

<sup>248</sup> Max Boot, "The New American Way of War," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2003).

<sup>249</sup> Hook and Spanier, 342.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>251</sup> Hook and Spanier, 344.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 344-5.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 346.

the al Qaeda leaders to justice. The goal of the mission was to round up the terrorists, including bin Laden, as they fled from their headquarters, but the mission failed. In the battle at Tora Bora, U.S. special forces were overtaken, allowing al Qaeda operatives to cross into Pakistan. And Bin Laden, still a major threat to the U.S., escaped despite a reward of \$5 million for his capture.<sup>256</sup>

Overall, the invasion of Afghanistan was inspired by Bush's modified operational code and grand strategy. Presumably, other presidents would have undertaken similar action, as the invasion's goals of bringing down the Taliban regime and capturing al Qaeda militants were directly related to countering the terrorist threat. Thus, it is not Bush's launch of the war in Afghanistan that is unique to his grand strategy, but the way in which he packaged his decision as a necessary component of the War on Terror and of his grand strategy. Yet, with regard to Afghanistan, just because he succeeded in putting U.S. policies in place that closely aligned with his grand strategy does not mean that this case was necessarily a success for the Bush Doctrine. For the war in Afghanistan dragged on, at a much higher economic and human cost than expected, for more than twelve years, outliving his presidency itself.

### *Invasion of Iraq*

The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was another significant event that tested whether Bush's grand strategy could achieve success. By fall 2002, his key foreign policy advisors agreed on the need to remove Saddam Hussein from power, but they disagreed on how the U.S. should go about doing it.<sup>257</sup> Whereas Cheney and Rumsfeld, of the in-group, advocated for military intervention, Powell, of the out-group, supported a multilateral, diplomatic approach that would empower the Iraqis to overthrow Saddam themselves.<sup>258</sup> Thus, Bush was forced to choose

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Davis, 22.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

between these two proposed strategies.<sup>259</sup> In his 2003 State of the Union address, he laid out the reasons why the U.S. should go to war with Iraq: (1) the cruelty of Saddam against his own people; (2) his flouting of treaties and resolutions; (3) the military threat that he posed to his neighbors; and (4) his ties to al Qaeda.<sup>260</sup> As the crux of his justification for the invasion, Bush cited intelligence confirming that Saddam had Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Thus, Bush continued to push for multilateral intervention in Iraq by stepping up his efforts to press Security Council members to vote in favor of a joint U.S.-UK proposal authorizing military intervention. When only Spain and Bulgaria agreed and the proposal fell five votes short of the required nine, he pledged that the U.S. did not need authorization from the international community to undertake a military invasion.<sup>261</sup> As promised, he gathered a “Coalition of the Willing,” consisting of the countries that supported the invasion.<sup>262</sup>

On March 19, a U.S.-led force began its invasion of Iraq.<sup>263</sup> American and British forces soon overwhelmed the Iraqi militias, paramilitary forces, and Republican Guard and seized control of the major cities at a rapid pace.<sup>264</sup> A sustained bombing campaign, dubbed “shock and awe” by U.S. military commanders, coincided with a massive ground offensive from Kuwait through the desert to Baghdad. On April 9, cheering Iraqis and U.S. Marines toppled a statue of Saddam. While the initial stages of the invasion had been successful, U.S.-led troops were left to

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<sup>259</sup> Davis, 23.

<sup>260</sup> George W. Bush, “State of the Union Address 2003,” (speech, Washington, DC, January 28, 2003), The White House Archives, <http://georgewbushwhitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>.

<sup>261</sup> Davis, 25.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Davis, 25.

<sup>264</sup> Hook and Spanier, 369.



stay and establish democratic institutions in a country where the conditions for achieving democracy were far from favorable.<sup>265</sup>

The invasion of Iraq was the defining moment for the Bush Doctrine. Whereas other presidents may have undertaken a similar response in the direct aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Iraq is what set Bush's grand strategy apart from others presidents' foreign policy strategies. The invasion is a direct product of his grand strategy, as evidenced by its preemptive, unilateral nature. That he went forward with the invasion without authorization from the international community, a bold move that reflected the shift in his operational code, shows that neoconservative elements within his administration—namely Cheney and Rumsfeld—had come to dominate the policymaking process. Yet, just because he managed to put U.S. policy in place in Iraq that aligned closely with his grand strategy does not mean that this case was a success for the Bush Doctrine. As in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq was highly costly to the U.S., economically as well as in human lives and international opinion.

### *Assessment of Grand Strategy*

In assessing Bush's attempt at grand strategy implementation, it is clear that after the September 11 attacks, the negative, conflictual elements of his worldview became more pronounced. Before the attacks, he was a domestically-focused president who had tackled education and Social Security reform in the wake of the 2002 presidential election. Afterwards, he became a war president, launching successive wars first in Afghanistan and later Iraq and instituting a new foreign policy platform of preemptive, unilateral military action.<sup>266</sup> The Bush Doctrine came to fruition in the wake of the terrorist attacks. Its implementation was facilitated by a number of checks and balances at the domestic level that fell out of place during his

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<sup>265</sup> Larry Diamond, "Can Iraq Become a Democracy?" *Hoover Digest* (March 29, 2003): 3.  
<sup>266</sup> Davis, 28.

presidency, creating an unusually permissive domestic environment for grand strategy implementation. At the international level, a number of tests assessed how his grand strategy would stand when confronted by external imperatives. His decisions surrounding the September 11 attacks and the U.S.-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, keystones of his global War on Terror, were directly influenced by his grand strategy. On the whole, Bush was successful in implementing his grand strategy in the sense that U.S. policy frequently reflected the Bush Doctrine. This was due largely to domestic factors that allowed him to implement his grand strategy with relative ease. These factors, all of which had the potential to derail his attempt at grand strategy implementation, aligned during his presidency, resulting in the Bush Doctrine being put in place relatively unchecked.

In assessing Bush's presidency according to the earlier established five-prong test for evaluating domestic factors, he faced: (1) a deeply split DMU; (2) a divided Congress during year one, a Republican-controlled Congress during years two and three, and a Democratically-controlled Congress during year four of his presidency; (3) an institutionally strong presidency as a result of the September 11 attacks; (4) extremely strong public support due to the rally effect; and (5) a healthy domestic economy. Overall, this assessment demonstrates that three out of five of the domestic factors critical to grand strategy implementation were decidedly working in Bush's favor; he was able to overcome the one that was not—a strong, unified team of foreign policy advisors—by means of his selective management style.

Based on the two-prong test for determining whether a president has succeeded in grand strategy implementation: (1) U.S. foreign policy during Bush's presidency often aligned with his grand strategy; and (2) the policies he put in place that aligned with his grand strategy rarely had

positive outcomes. He had an overall permissive package: his worldview, partnered with domestic opportunities, strengthened his ability to respond effectively to international events. Thus, while Bush's grand strategy is inherently difficult to assess because it encompassed a number of long-term goals that transcended his presidency, based on this test, it is clear that he had positive results in terms of implementation. However, in terms of the outcomes of his implementation, his results were mixed and arguably more negative, signaling a problem with the strategy itself. While he succeeded in putting his grand strategy in place, in the long run, it harmed the standing of the U.S.; the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were longer and more costly than anticipated and led to a global surge in anti-American sentiment. These results can be explained by a set of interconnected factors at the individual, domestic, and systemic levels of analysis that impacted each other, and ultimately facilitated Bush's attempt at grand strategy implementation.

Bush developed a clear, logically coherent, and well-defined grand strategy after the September 11 attacks.<sup>267</sup> But these characteristics did not make it a good one, and its implementation led to more harm than good.<sup>268</sup> In fact, the Bush Doctrine not only became politically unpopular, but it put the U.S. on an unsustainable long-term path. While Bush's grand strategy had been designed to stabilize the international system by asserting the benevolent intentions of its most powerful state, it appeared to have the opposite effect, particularly with regard to Iraq.<sup>269</sup> When no WMD were discovered in the country, the Iraq War and the ensuing wave of anti-Americanism subjected him to harsh national and international scrutiny.<sup>270</sup> From nearly universal sympathy in the weeks after the September 11 attacks, the U.S. within a year

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<sup>267</sup> Drezner, 1.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Hook and Spanier, 351.

<sup>270</sup> Haley, 3; Drezner, 3.

and a half found itself widely regarded as an international pariah.<sup>271</sup> Nevertheless, Bush consistently asserted the correctness of his policies and his bold decision to undertake a full-scale military conflict in Iraq.<sup>272</sup> For better or for worse, the Bush Doctrine disregarded the principle that the margins of American advantage are not so great as to allow the U.S. to wage unilateral war whenever it chooses.<sup>273</sup> His administration serves as a case study of the conditions that make it relatively easy for a president to put a grand strategy—though not necessarily a good one—in place: a clear, easily implemented idea; a permissive domestic environment rooted bipartisan support; and international leadership in the face of crisis.

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<sup>271</sup> Gaddis.

<sup>272</sup> Davis, 25-6.

<sup>273</sup> Haley, 9.

### Obama's Foreign Policy (2008-2012)

*"I reject the notion that the American moment has passed...I still believe that America is the last, best hope of Earth. We just have to show the world why this is so."*

—Barack Obama

*"When you start applying blanket policies on the complexities of the current world situation, you're going to get yourself into trouble."*

—Barack Obama

#### *Characterization of Foreign Policy*

If there is one idea that sums up Barack Obama's first term foreign policy, it is engagement.<sup>274</sup> His grand strategy—the Obama Doctrine—called for redefining American leadership in an increasingly globalized world and engaging with a multitude of state and non-state actors such as NGOs and other transnational groups in the international system. It placed a high value on working with allies and within multilateral institutions under the auspices of global governance and international law.<sup>275</sup> He was a strong proponent of the belief that the U.S. must accept the constraints of working within these institutions to achieve its international goals, and that it must seek legitimacy in its attempts to protect its vital interests.<sup>276</sup> His grand strategy envisioned the world not as multipolar, but as multipartner, and it attempted to effectively reset—even transform—U.S. foreign policy.<sup>277</sup>

Accordingly, the best-known phrase that articulates Obama's grand strategy is "leading from behind."<sup>278</sup> Based on this paradigm, he advocated for avoiding international entanglements unless they were absolutely vital to U.S. national interests. He embraced the tenet that when

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<sup>274</sup> George Packer, "Long Engagements," *The New Yorker*, February 11, 2013, accessed February 17, 2013, [http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2013/02/11/130211taco\\_talk\\_packer](http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2013/02/11/130211taco_talk_packer).

<sup>275</sup> Craig Hayden, *The Rhetoric of Soft Power* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2012), 237.  
<sup>276</sup> Haley, 9.

<sup>277</sup> Hayden, 237.

<sup>278</sup> Drezner, 6.

undertaking a foreign intervention, it was essential that the U.S. seek authority from the international community and partner with allies, using a “light footprint” strategy. In this way, the Obama Doctrine is distinct from the Bush Doctrine. Whereas the Bush Doctrine advocated for upholding American primary and promoting democracy at any price, even in the face of international disapproval, Obama’s grand strategy sought to move away from the unilateral rhetoric of the War on Terror. His grand strategy also advocated for the use of soft power. It espoused transformational diplomacy, based on the idea that influence is accomplished in the revelation of shared values and, in particular, that the values embodied by the U.S.—that all men and women are created equal and that all are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—are universal.<sup>279</sup> As a manifestation of these values, his grand strategy emphasized the promotion, but not imposition, of democracy and human rights.

Yet, Obama’s grand strategy also embraced American exceptionalism and placed a strong emphasis on protecting U.S. interests. According to his grand strategy, domestic rejuvenation was the most important U.S. interest. As such, boosting public investment in education, science, and clean energy was crucial to long-term success.<sup>280</sup> Rhodes summarized Obama’s grand strategy approach: winding down the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, reestablishing American standing and leadership in the world, and focusing on a broader set of priorities, from Asia and the global economy to a nuclear-nonproliferation regime.<sup>281</sup> All in all, the Obama Doctrine espoused the principle that “the American dream is threatened by many urgent problems, but by working hard and working together, it can be reclaimed and strengthened.”<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Hayden, 227, 234.

<sup>280</sup> Drezner, 4-5.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>282</sup> Robert C. Rowland, “The Fierce Urgency of Now: Barack Obama and the 2008 Presidential Election,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 54 (2010): 204-6.

Obama expressed the underlying principles of his grand strategy in a number of significant speeches, including his first and second inaugural addresses. “We will extent a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist,” he proclaimed in his first inaugural, and in his second he said, “We will show the courage to try and resolve our differences with other nations peacefully. Not because we are naïve about the dangers we face, but because engagement can more durably lift suspicion and fear.”<sup>283</sup> A number of his major foreign policy speeches abroad, namely in Strasbourg, France on April 5, 2009; in Prague, Czech Republic on April 5; in Cairo, Egypt on June 4; and in his Nobel Peace Prize speech in Oslo, Norway on December 10, echoed themes of engagement and renewed relationships.<sup>284</sup> In these speeches, he employed aspirational norm setting—declaring his intention to achieve a nuclear free world in Prague and calling for mutual understanding between the U.S. and the Arab world in Cairo.<sup>285</sup> While his aspirational speeches did not necessarily reflect his foreign policy accomplishments, they did embody the sense of optimism and renewal that accompanied his first term.

Insight into the outcome of Obama’s attempt at grand strategy implementation can be found at the individual, domestic and systemic levels of analysis. At the individual level, analysis of his operational code is important to understanding his grand strategy as they are closely

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<sup>283</sup> Barack Obama, “Inaugural Address,” (speech, Washington, DC, January 20, 2009), The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/president-barack-obamas-inaugural-address>.

<sup>284</sup> Douglas C. Foyle, “Vox Populi as a Foundation for Foreign Policy Renewal?” in *U.S. Foreign Policy Today: American Renewal?* ed. Steven W. Hook et al. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2012), 70.

<sup>285</sup> Martin Indyk, “The Midterm Fix: Barack Obama’s Progressive-Pragmatic Foreign Policy Meets Its Middle East Test,” *The Berlin Journal* 19 (Fall 2010): 23; Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on a New Beginning,” (speech, Washington, DC, June 4, 2009), The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>; Barack Obama, “Prague Speech on Nuclear Weapons,” *Huffington Post*, May 25, 2011, accessed April 23, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/05/obama-prague-speechonnu\\_n\\_183219.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/05/obama-prague-speechonnu_n_183219.html).

related. Such an examination shows that according to his initial operational code, hostilities in the political universe could be addressed through pragmatic cooperation. Rooted in his operational code, he adjusted his grand strategy to be more attuned to global realities, but it still encompassed his multilateralist, “reset” agenda. Also at the individual level, the selection and management of his foreign policy advisors affected his options for grand strategy implementation at the domestic and systemic levels.

At the domestic level, Obama faced a number of factors that affected how successful he could be at achieving his foreign policy goals. Based on the five-prong test for assessing domestic factors, he was confronted with: (1) a foreign policy team that was divided but open to communication; (2) a Democratically-controlled Congress for the first two years of his presidency and a Republican controlled Congress for the final two years; (3) extended presidential power in the aftermath of Bush’s presidency; (4) initially strong, though weakened public opinion; and (5) an economy in crisis. These domestic factors are connected to those at the individual level in that they impacted Obama’s foreign policy decisions. They are also interrelated with those at the systemic level because they affected how well he could respond to international events.

At the systemic level, Obama faced the inherited legacy of the war in Afghanistan, the rise of China, and the uprisings in Egypt and Libya, a series of events that tested the outcome of his grand strategy. In response to these systemic events, he shifted his grand strategy to become more moderate. These systemic factors are connected to those at the individual level in that they caused a shift in his foreign policy decisions. They are also interrelated with those at the domestic level in that they brought many domestic level factors to the surface. Based on the two-prong test for evaluating grand strategy success, he: (1) often succeeded in implementing policies



that aligned with his modified grand strategy; and (2) when he implemented policies that aligned with his modified grand strategy, they were relatively successful. He had an overall mixed package: his worldview, partnered with domestic opportunities and constraints, both facilitated and impeded his ability to respond effectively to international events. Thus, Obama achieved relative success by both accounts.

### *Individual Level of Analysis*

Obama's operational code is critical to understanding his grand strategy, as the two are closely linked. Stephen G. Walker produced an analysis of Obama's operational code, based on pre-presidential tests, that suggests an unusual pattern.<sup>286</sup> He finds that according to Obama's operational code, the political universe is hostile, dominated by chance, and therefore unpredictable.<sup>287</sup> Further, he is pessimistic regarding the realization of his political values and attributes a high role to chance.<sup>288</sup> For many people, such a pattern would lead to a passive withdrawal rather than instrumental action. Obama, however, retained a sense of being in control. Accordingly, his instrumental beliefs and strategies emphasized cooperation based on appeals and rewards, rather than threats—though on issues perceived as critical, the appeal for cooperation was supplemented by an emphasis on control.<sup>289</sup> His instrumental beliefs also dictated a high level of acceptance in his orientation toward risk. Additionally, he was shown to have had an average degree of flexibility in his propensity to shift between cooperation and conflict.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Stephen G. Walker, "Quantum Politics and Operational Code Analysis: Theories and Methods," in *Rethinking Foreign Policy Analysis: States, Leaders, and the Microfoundations of Behavioral International Relations* ed. Stephen G. Walker et al. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 72-8; David G. Winter, "Philosopher-King or Polarizing Politician? A Personality Profile of Barack Obama," *Political Psychology* 32 (2011): 1065.

<sup>287</sup> Walker (2011), 75; Winter, 1065.

<sup>288</sup> Winter, 1065.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Walker (2011), 77.

Magnus Johnsson, in his analysis of Obama's operational code, asserts that another foundational element in his worldview is the interdependence between individuals and society.<sup>291</sup>

Accordingly, his operational code can be characterized as "pragmatic cooperation in a difficult world."<sup>292</sup>

Obama himself cites philosopher Reinhold Niebuhr as a source of inspiration for his worldview.<sup>293</sup> In a 2007 interview, he claimed that he had taken from Niebuhr the "idea that there's serious evil in the world, and hardship and pain...But we shouldn't use that as an excuse for cynicism and inaction."<sup>294</sup> This is embodied in Obama's pragmatism and inclusivity, and in his willingness to compromise when necessary, while continuing to articulate a vision of "working hard and working together," instead of "drawing lines in the sand."<sup>295</sup> With regard to how his operational code changed over the course of his first term, little research has been conducted thus far; this makes assessing specific changes in his operational code and hence his grand strategy difficult.

On top of Obama's operational code, his advisor selection and management style were additional factors at the individual level that affected the outcome of his grand strategy. In selecting his foreign policy advisors, he sought to bridge the realist and liberal internationalist foreign policy strands within the Democratic Party.<sup>296</sup> As secretary of state, he chose Hillary

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<sup>291</sup> Magnus Johnsson, "The Worldview of Barack Obama: An Operational Code Analysis" (M.A. Thesis, Swedish National Defense College, Department of Security and Strategic Studies, 2009).

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Winter, 1065.

<sup>294</sup> David Brooks, "Obama, Gospel and Verse," *New York Times*, April 26, 2007, accessed April 22, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/26/opinion/26brooks.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/26/opinion/26brooks.html?_r=0).

<sup>295</sup> Winter, 1066.

<sup>296</sup> Robert S. Singh, "Continuity and Change in Obama's Foreign Policy," in *The Obama Presidency: Appraisals and Prospects*, ed. Bert A. Rockman et al. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2012), 273.

Clinton, his opponent in the 2008 Democratic primary. As secretary of defense, he chose Robert Gates, a holdover from the Bush administration, in an effort to ensure continuity in the Pentagon during wartime. Obama attempted to create an NSC that would allow the White House to maximize control over the policy process.<sup>297</sup> He also put a number of interagency committees in place to coordinate analysis between federal agencies on complex issues.<sup>298</sup> With this in mind, he appointed James Jones, a retired Marine Corps General, as NSA.<sup>299</sup> After two years, Jones stepped down from the position, amid reports that he had struggled to fit in with the Obama team.<sup>300</sup> Obama named Tom Donilon, Jones's deputy, as his replacement.<sup>301</sup> Another of Obama's key foreign policy advisors, Susan Rice, who formerly served on the staff of the NSC, was appointed as U.S. ambassador to the UN.<sup>302</sup> Upon taking office, Obama restored her position to cabinet-level and repaid the United States' back payments to the UN, highlighting his globalist mentality and his commitment to international institutions, both key elements of his grand strategy.

Obama's options for grand strategy implementation at the domestic and systemic levels were impacted not only by his selection of foreign policy advisors, but also by the manner in which he oversaw them. His management style was highly deliberative and formalistic. With the goal of overseeing a "team of rivals," rather than rival teams, he insisted on analytical rigor in

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<sup>297</sup> Ryan Lizza, "The Consequentialist: How the Arab Spring Remade Obama's Foreign Policy," *The New Yorker*, May 2, 2011.

<sup>298</sup> Hastedt, 25.

<sup>299</sup> Lizza, 4; "Obama's Foreign Policy Team," *New American*, December 22, 2008; Hastedt, 25.

<sup>300</sup> Carol E. Lee and Gordon Lubold, "Tom Donilon to Replace James Jones as National Security Council Chief," *Politico*, October 8, 2010, accessed April 23, 2012, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1010/43323.html>.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> "Ambassador the United Nations - Susan Rice Announced," *Real Clear Politics*, December 1, 2008, accessed April 23, 2013, <http://www.realclearpolitics.com/lists/cabinet/rice.html>.

evaluating problems, made sure that dissenting voices were heard, and that a range of options were considered.<sup>303</sup> His management style emphasized a sense of openness to outcomes and process.<sup>304</sup> Issues and options, not people, were at the heart of his decision making approach.<sup>305</sup> The downside of this method was that it was rarely compatible with quick decision making, which sometimes—as in the review processes for Afghanistan and Libya—led to criticism that Obama was indecisive.<sup>306</sup> Further, it required him to invest a good deal of his personal time and attention coordinating the inner members of his DMU, which on most issues included Clinton, Donilon, Vice President Joseph Biden, Senior Advisor David Axelrod, and Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel.<sup>307</sup> On the whole, Obama—nicknamed the “professor-in-chief”—oversaw his foreign policy advisors in a style that fit with his cerebral, collaborative personal characteristics and the inclusive nature of his grand strategy.

### *Domestic Level of Analysis*

Obama also faced factors at the domestic level that affected how successful he could be in achieving his foreign policy goals, tensions among his foreign policy advisors being one of them. While his management philosophy sought to fill each position in his administration with the single most qualified person for the job, it failed to account for the fact that this meant his advisors lacked a common approach to dealing with international issues.<sup>308</sup> In fact, they weren't

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<sup>303</sup> James P. Pfiffner, “Decision Making in the Obama White House,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 41 (June 2011): 249; Robert Singh, *Barack Obama's Post-American Foreign Policy: The Limits of Engagement* (London: Bloomsbury Academy: 2012).

<sup>304</sup> Hastedt, 23.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Andrew Rudalevige, “Rivals, or a Team? Staffing and Issue Management in the Obama Administration” in *The Obama Presidency: Appraisals and Prospects*, ed. Bert A. Rockman (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2012), 190.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> James Mann, *The Obamians: The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power* (New York: Viking, 2012), xviii.

even all Democrats: Gates had served under Bush and Jones had spent his career in the military. The vastly different perspectives of Obama's key advisors contributed to tensions within the DMU.

Therefore, Obama came to rely heavily upon his own small, informal network of czars and close aides—termed “the Obamians” by author and journalist James Mann.<sup>309</sup> Although they did not hold cabinet-level positions and had minimal foreign policy experience, they were installed by Obama primarily on the NSC. They were, for the most part, young idealists who had worked with him on the campaign. Of his foreign policy advisors, they shared his views most closely.<sup>310</sup> Denis McDonough, Obama's close confidant and the NSC's second-in-command, and Benjamin J. Rhodes, his deputy national security advisor for strategic communication, were prime examples of “the Obamians” in that they were relatively young Democrats who reflected Obama's own views.<sup>311</sup> Interestingly, although Obama officially employed an inclusive decision making process that incorporated dissenting opinions, power was centered in the hands of his informal advisors, whose views aligned closely with his grand strategy. The incorporation of unofficial actors into the DMU sparked further tensions, as a generational conflict emerged between the Democratic establishment—including Gates, Clinton, and Biden—and Obama and his inner circle of advisors. By privileging the views of a small network of aides that shared his policy perspectives over those of his official advisors, Obama attempted to implement policies that aligned with his grand strategy.

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid.; David Rothkopf, “It's Official: Obama Creates More Czars Than the Romanovs,” *Foreign Policy*, April 16, 2009, accessed April 27, 2013, [http://rothkopf.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/04/16/its\\_official\\_obama\\_creates\\_more\\_czars\\_than\\_the\\_romanovs](http://rothkopf.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/04/16/its_official_obama_creates_more_czars_than_the_romanovs).

<sup>310</sup> Mann, xviii.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 66-75.

In addition to having to deal with tensions among his foreign policy team, Obama faced a number of urgent domestic issues that took priority and delayed the achievement of his broader foreign policy goals. Upon taking office, he faced a number of competing demands on the domestic front, namely a financial crisis, the most severe recession since the Great Depression, and a floundering U.S. healthcare system whose costs were rising rapidly. Clearly, there was transformational work to be done at home, and he spent the first two years of his presidency doing so.<sup>312</sup> The first order of business was an economic stimulus plan: the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, passed in February 2009, combined anti-recession actions with long-run initiatives that laid the foundations for his substantive policy agenda.<sup>313</sup> His second order of business was financial regulation: the Dodd-Frank Act, passed in July 2010, increased oversight of the financial sector.<sup>314</sup> His third major domestic initiative was the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act—known as Obamacare—a comprehensive overhaul of the healthcare system that was passed in March 2010.<sup>315</sup> Because Obama was forced to address these domestic issues during his first two years in office, he was confined to focusing only on the most pressing international concerns, such as winding down the war in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, his grand strategy did prioritize domestic rejuvenation as a cornerstone of rebuilding the United States' standing in the world. Thus, after undertaking some much needed improvements at home, he turned his attention to a broader set of international concerns.

In doing so, he faced another challenge at the domestic level in the form of a hyper-partisan, recalcitrant Congress. Initially, when both the Senate and the House were controlled by

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<sup>312</sup> Indyk (2010), 23.

<sup>313</sup> M. Stephen Weatherford, "Economic Crisis and Political Change: A New New Deal?" in *The Obama Presidency*, ed. Bert A. Rockman et al. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2012), 306.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 311-5.

<sup>315</sup> Richard Miniter, *Leading From Behind: The Reluctant President and the Advisors Who Decide for Him* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012), 45-76.

Democrats, there was a period of congressional support for his initiatives.<sup>316</sup> Later, when the Democrats lost their supermajority in the Senate in January 2010, the legislative body was plagued by endless partisan bickering that hampered its ability to address most of his foreign policy proposals.<sup>317</sup> When the Republicans reclaimed the majority in the House and further narrowed the Democrats' advantage in the Senate following the November midterm elections, the policymaking environment became even more toxic.<sup>318</sup>

After the midterm elections, especially, Congress and the Obama administration parted ways on many key foreign policy issues.<sup>319</sup> Notably, congressional Republicans blocked Obama's attempt to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay, an objective that had been central to the renewal agenda espoused by his grand strategy.<sup>320</sup> From Democrats, he faced opposition to the Afghan troop surge; his inclusion of a deadline for the beginning of the U.S. troop withdrawal in the announcement of the surge was a concession to congressional Democrats.<sup>321</sup> On U.S. relations with Iran, his dual-track approach—whereby he first attempted to engage in diplomatic negotiations and then threatened to impose sanctions—was jeopardized by Congress.<sup>322</sup> Congress did not follow his lead on Iran; the legislative body passed a sanctions bill against the explicit disapproval of the administration.<sup>323</sup> As evidenced, Congress affected a number of policies that were closely aligned with Obama's grand strategy, the troop surge, Guantanamo, and relations with Iran chief among them.

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<sup>316</sup> Carter and Scott, 48.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Carter and Scott, 48.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 50-1.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

Obama faced resistance to his policies not only by Congress, but also among the public, another check at the domestic level that affected how successful he could be at implementing his grand strategy. His election sparked a moment of public euphoria that was short-lived.<sup>324</sup> Although he began his presidency with very strong public opinion, despite having passed important legislation to rebuild the economy and reform the healthcare system, his approval ratings drifted below fifty percent during his second year in office, lower than the historical average for U.S. presidents.<sup>325</sup> His low public approval was in part a response to the conditions that he inherited, namely the Great Recession and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. But on a deeper level, the public was responding to the fact that once confronted with economic and political realities, Obama struggled to implement policies that aligned with his grand strategy and lived up to the standards he had set during the election. He had articulated a clear, coherent grand strategy so successfully during the election that it was now impossible for him to live up to the rhetoric he had employed to sell it. In this sense, he hindered his own attempt at grand strategy implementation. As a result, he was forced to adjust his grand strategy to become more attuned to low approval ratings, a domestic economy in crisis, tensions among his foreign policy advisors, and a toxic political climate.

### *Systemic Level of Analysis*

As established, Obama's political style and belief system allowed him to capitalize on an initial boost in public opinion and a Democratically-controlled Congress during the first year of his presidency. At the same time, he was forced to confront tensions among his foreign policy

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<sup>324</sup> Gary C. Jacobson, "Polarization, Public Opinion, and the Presidency: The Obama and Anti-Obama Coalitions," in *The Obama Presidency: Appraisals and Prospects*, ed. Bert A. Rockman et al. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2012), 94.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.; "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Barack Obama," Gallup, accessed April 24, 2013, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>.



advisors, urgent domestic concerns, a sharp downturn in public approval, and a stalled Congress. These domestic factors forced him to implement a modified version of his grand strategy that was rooted in his original principles, but adjusted to better address domestic realities. At the systemic level, several significant events tested whether his grand strategy would allow him to navigate international challenges: planning an end to the war in Afghanistan (2009), the Abbottabad raid that killed Bin Laden (2011), the attempted “reset” of relations with Russia (2009), ending the war in Iraq (2011), China’s rise (1980s-present), the Iranian nuclear program (1980s-present), and the Arab uprisings (2010-present). Focusing on the war in Afghanistan, China’s rise, and the uprisings in Egypt and Libya provide insight into how his grand strategy was filtered through factors at the individual and domestic levels of analysis. The goal of this analysis is to determine under what conditions a president can implement a grand strategy given the nature of domestic and international opportunities and constraints, and what the implications of doing so are for U.S. foreign policy. To address this question, the aforementioned two-prong test for measuring success at grand strategy implementation and the five-prong test for assessing key domestic factors that affect grand strategy implementation will be employed.

### *War in Afghanistan*

The major foreign project of Obama’s first term was dealing with the inherited legacy of the war in Afghanistan. Between 2001 and 2009, the situation in the country had deteriorated; the Taliban was making a comeback and challenged Hamid Karzai’s central government and tribal leaders for control.<sup>326</sup> When it became clear in summer 2009 that the U.S. was continuing to lose ground in the country, Obama replaced U.S. commander General McKiernan with General Stanley McChrystal, who favored a counterinsurgency strategy that would concentrate

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<sup>326</sup> Pfiffner, 255.

on protecting the civilian population and building Afghan governing capacity.<sup>327</sup> In August, McChrystal delivered a troop request—known as the “McChrystal memo”—to Obama with options for increasing the U.S. troop presence in the country by 40,000, 30,000, or 10,000.<sup>328</sup> In the memo, McChrystal argued that more troops would enable the U.S. to prevail in the country.<sup>329</sup>

Obama held a series of meetings with his advisors to decide the future of the U.S. military commitment.<sup>330</sup> On the one hand, Secretaries Gates and Clinton and military leaders advocated for an additional 40,000 troops.<sup>331</sup> Biden, on the other hand, supported a counterterrorism campaign that would focus on defeating al Qaeda rather than on building a government in the country. On October 9, Obama made the key decision to change the U.S. mission from defeating the Taliban to “degrading it.”<sup>332</sup> Then, on November 29, he announced a 30,000-troop surge—a relatively quick increase in troop strength with a clear time line for beginning a drawdown, which would send a message to Karzai that the U.S. commitment was not open-ended.<sup>333</sup>

The troop surge serves as a valuable case study because it sheds light on Obama’s deliberative decision making process, his formalistic management style, and his attempt at grand strategy implementation. In this case, he reached a decision after twenty-five hours of meetings

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Pfiffner, 257; Stanley McChrystal, “Commander’s Initial Assessment Headquarters International Security Assistance Force Kabul, Afghanistan,” Council on Foreign Relations, August 30, 2009, accessed April 24, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/mcchrystals-initial-assessment-report-situation-afghanistanaugust-2009/p20241>.

<sup>330</sup> Pfiffner, 257.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 258-9.

and nine official review sessions spread over three months.<sup>334</sup> He was praised by some for his careful evaluation of the role of the U.S. military in South Asia.<sup>335</sup> But he was also criticized for his drawn-out deliberation process.<sup>336</sup> During these deliberations, he acted as his own honest broker—listening to the arguments made, evaluating them, asking questions, and making a decision that he formulated after hearing them.<sup>337</sup> In deciding to commit 30,000 troops, he explicitly rejected the options presented by his advisors and came to his own decision that was inspired directly by his grand strategy.<sup>338</sup> Ultimately, it reflected the value he placed both on ending the war in Afghanistan, as he had promised on the campaign trail, and on not rushing into unnecessary entanglements. His choice was politically difficult, as it risked alienating his support on the left of the Democratic Party.<sup>339</sup> That he was forced to include a drawdown date in his announcement—a concession to congressional Democrats—speaks to the fact that his grand strategy was muddled by domestic level constraints such as a partisan Congress. Overall, Obama’s plan for ending the war in Afghanistan tested whether his grand strategy was fit to respond to international realities.

### *Rise of China*

China’s rise was another systemic level concern that tested whether the Obama Doctrine could achieve success. Upon taking office, Obama’s major geostrategic challenge was how to react to the dramatic rise of China.<sup>340</sup> The country’s dramatic economic growth, averaging 10

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<sup>334</sup> Hastedt, 26.

<sup>335</sup> Pfiffner, 256.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 259; Alexander George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), 201.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Jeffrey A. Bader, *Obama and China’s Rise: An Insider’s Account of America’s Asia Strategy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2012), 2.

percent per year, and its integration into the economies of the region through a network of trade and investment had given rise to claims that it had become the United States' "peer competitor."<sup>341</sup> Even more worrisome, its military spending had grown at an even faster pace than its economy.<sup>342</sup>

It was clear to the Obama administration that containment was not a plausible option for dealing with China.<sup>343</sup> Neither was a unidimensional approach; U.S. policy could not rely on military, economic, or human rights pressure alone. At the same time, indifference to the country's rise could provoke bad behavior and frighten U.S. allies. Thus, Obama was tasked with fine-tuning an approach that would avoid these extremes.<sup>344</sup> During his first year in office, he sought to deepen cooperation between the U.S. and China and to encourage the country to assume a greater leadership role and responsibilities.<sup>345</sup> Multilaterally, he intensified U.S. participation in Asian regional organizations and meetings such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation form (APEC), and the East Asia Summit (EAS).<sup>346</sup> Bilaterally, he revamped the annual U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue.<sup>347</sup> In November 2009, he visited China, making him the first U.S. president to visit the country during his first year in office.<sup>348</sup> Overall, he viewed these efforts as crucial to offsetting the rise of China and reasserting American leadership in an increasingly critical region of the world.

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Bader, 3.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Singh, "Continuity and Change in Obama's Foreign Policy," 285.

<sup>346</sup> Bader, 3-4.

<sup>347</sup> Singh, "Continuity and Change in Obama's Foreign Policy," 284-5.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 284.

However, his policy of inspiring China to become a responsible stakeholder in the international order effectively collapsed.<sup>349</sup> By early 2010, the Obama administration concluded that the financial crisis had convinced China of the United States' accelerating decline, thus causing it to become increasingly assertive.<sup>350</sup> Accordingly, Obama abandoned his policy of strategic engagement and announced a strategic "pivot" from the Middle East to East Asia—termed the "pivot to Asia." The pivot involved tightening security, economic, and diplomatic relationships with most of China's neighbors in the region. With the goal of drawing China's neighbors into a web of partnerships, he oversaw an increased U.S. military presence in the Philippines, New Zealand, Australia, Vietnam, and other countries in the region.<sup>351</sup> Economically, he implemented the South Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the goal of strengthening relation with South Korea while simultaneously offsetting the influence of China and North Korea.<sup>352</sup> Diplomatically, he eased sanctions on Myanmar, both to reward its government for undertaking democratic reforms and to establish another alliance in the region.<sup>353</sup>

Seeking to avoid a serious deterioration in U.S.-China relations, China reacted mildly to these efforts, and most of the other countries in the region welcomed the pivot with open arms.<sup>354</sup> Thus, Obama's response to the rise of China, based on the theory of offshore balancing—a strategy of burden shifting that aims to maintain U.S. power by withdrawing or downsizing

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<sup>349</sup> Singh, "Continuity and Change in Obama's Foreign Policy," 284-5.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>351</sup> Hillary Rodham Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, accessed April 24, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/10/175215.htm>.

<sup>352</sup> Barack Obama, "Statement by the President Announcing the U.S.-Korea Trade Agreement," (speech, Washington, DC, December 3, 2010), The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/03/statement-president-announcing-us-korea-trade-agreement>.

<sup>353</sup> "Obama Eases U.S. Sanctions on Myanmar," *Reuters*, July 11, 2012, accessed April 24, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/11/us-myanmar-usa-sanctions-obamaidUSBRE86A0XE20120711>.

<sup>354</sup> Kenneth Lieberthal, "The American Pivot to Asia," *Foreign Policy*, December 21, 2011.

forces in Europe and the Middle East and instead concentrating military power in East Asia—achieved relative success.<sup>355</sup> His initial attempt at engagement with China, followed by his transition to a more aggressive approach, was directly influenced by his operational code and grand strategy, which advocated for cooperative engagement, but emphasized control on critical issues. As demonstrated by this and other systemic issues, his grand strategy implementation was checked by national and international realities. Notably, he was forced to abandon his original policy of strategic engagement when the financial crisis hurt U.S. leverage over China. Obama's pivot strategy, based on a modified version of his grand strategy that was adjusted to domestic and systemic realities, was rooted in his operational code belief system of forging cooperative alliances with a wide range of political actors.

*Arab Uprisings: Egypt and Libya*

The uprisings in Egypt and Libya were another systemic level event that tested the outcome of Obama's grand strategy. According to Martin Indyk, vice president and director of the foreign policy program at the Brookings Institution, "Nobody inside the U.S. government (nor outside, for that matter) predicted the self-immolation of a fruit seller in Tunisia would provide the spark for the revolutionary impulses that would sweep across the Arab world."<sup>356</sup> Thus, Obama was poorly positioned to deal with a sweeping challenge to the Arab regimes.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> "National Interest: The (Almost) Triumph of Offshore Balancing," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed February 10, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/united-states/national-interest-almost-triumph-offshorebalancing/p27207>.

<sup>356</sup> Martin Indyk, "Obama and the Arab Awakenings: U.S. Middle East Strategy in a Time of Turmoil," in *The Arab Revolutions and American Policy*, ed. Nicholas Burns et al. (Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute, 2013), 71.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 73.

For Obama, the “policy clock” started ticking on January 26, 2011, when the Tahrir Square protests began in Egypt.<sup>358</sup> On February 1, after concluding that these large-scale protests were just and could not be stopped, he had his envoy deliver the message that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak must give up power. Then, going against advice from his advisors, Obama called Mubarak personally to tell him that he must leave office, and then made the same demand in a public statement.<sup>359</sup> While he realized that Mubarak’s fall would likely lead to increased political power for the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists, he was willing to deal with the consequences.<sup>360</sup> Thus, he used U.S. leverage over the Egyptian military to assist in bringing about a mostly peaceful regime change.<sup>361</sup> When the Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi won the June 2012 presidential election, Obama recognized his legitimacy.<sup>362</sup>

Obama’s policy toward Libya displayed the same cautious activism that characterized his response to the Egyptian revolution. The uprisings in Libya were sparked by President Muammar Qaddafi’s four-decade-long effort to consolidate his power and rule by patronage.<sup>363</sup> Whereas demonstrators in Egypt successfully overthrew Mubarak, Libya collapsed into a drawn-out civil war—and soon became a secession—or multiple separate secessions—from a failed state.<sup>364</sup> When Obama decided to use military force in the country, he developed what amounted to the Obama Doctrine for the Arab uprisings: “In situations where its interests are not directly

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<sup>358</sup> David Ignatius, “Obama’s Strategy for the ‘Arab Spring’ Revolutions: What Has the Administration Tried to Do—and How Well Has it Succeeded?” in *The Arab Revolutions and American Policy*, ed. Nicholas Burns et al. (Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute, 2013), 33.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>361</sup> Drezner, 5.

<sup>362</sup> Ignatius, 34.

<sup>363</sup> Lisa Anderson, “Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya,” *Foreign Affairs* (2011): 6.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

threatened, the U.S. will use force only when it has regional and international backing.”<sup>365</sup> Even then it will not necessarily take the lead role.<sup>366</sup>

Accordingly, on February 28, Obama oversaw the removal of Libya from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).<sup>367</sup> The debate then turned to whether the U.S. and others should intervene militarily; the principal option was to set up a no-fly zone.<sup>368</sup> For Obama, whose grand strategy sought to disentangle the U.S. from unnecessary conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, this was a particularly difficult decision.<sup>369</sup> Among his foreign policy advisors, Gates objected most strongly to military intervention, while Clinton made the case for a no-fly zone.<sup>370</sup> Obama decided to pursue a more robust UN resolution that would allow the U.S. and NATO allies to protect the rebels by bombing government forces.<sup>371</sup> On March 17, the UNSC passed his resolution, authorizing military action in the country.<sup>372</sup> Two days later, a multinational coalition began the military intervention—termed a “kinetic military action” by Obama—that succeeded in ousting Qaddafi.<sup>373</sup>

On the whole, Obama’s reaction to the uprisings in Egypt and Libya looks reactive and improvised, but a flexible approach that protected U.S. interests was critical in the face of rapidly evolving events.<sup>374</sup> His response was a direct product of his operational code and grand strategy. In Egypt, although he initially supported Mubarak, he switched his position to align with the democratic will of the Egyptian populace, acting on the underlying principle, voiced in his

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<sup>365</sup> Ignatius, 37.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Lizza, 16.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Drezner, 7.

<sup>374</sup> Indyk (2013), 78.



aspirational speech in Cairo, that democracy is a universal, not a Western value. In Libya, he placed an emphasis on gathering a coalition and seeking international authority via multilateral organizations, which contrasted directly with the fearless unilateralism of the Bush Doctrine. Overall, the Obama Doctrine for the Arab uprisings, like the general Obama Doctrine, prescribed cautious multilateralism, a tenet that inspired the principle of “leading from behind.”<sup>375</sup> The uprisings in Egypt and Libya tested the outcome of his grand strategy at the international level. The policies he put in place, which aligned closely with his operational code and grand strategy, showed that for an economically-troubled U.S. that was still fighting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, “leading from behind” was a paradigm with real-world applicability.

#### *Assessment of Grand Strategy*

In assessing Obama’s attempt at grand strategy implementation, it is clear that although he came into office with a grand strategy that called for the “reset” of U.S. foreign policy, he was forced to moderate his grand strategy in the face of domestic challenges, namely tensions among his foreign policy advisors, hyper-partisanship in Congress, low approval ratings, a domestic economy in crisis, and a number of domestic concerns that took priority during his first two years as president. Nevertheless, he still succeeded in implementing a grand strategy that was directly influenced by his operational code. Characterized by the principles of “reset,” pragmatic cooperation, and “leading from behind,” the Obama Doctrine was tested at the international level by the plan to end the war in Afghanistan, the rise of China, and the uprisings in Egypt and Libya. On the whole, the Obama Doctrine proved effective in responding to these events, though Obama’s responses often had to be fine-tuned to global realities.

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<sup>375</sup> Ignatius, 37.

In a larger sense, Obama's success at grand strategy implementation proves that grand strategies do not deserve the bad reputation that they have earned. Whereas the Carter and Bush Doctrines had fairly narrow plans for how to protect a limited set of national interests, the Obama Doctrine had a clear strategic vision, but was not dogmatic and did not offer an oversimplified view of the world. Its flexibility allowed Obama to implement a grand strategy at a time when politically, it was hard to build consensus around anything. It also allowed him to address an exceedingly complex portfolio of international concerns that did not necessarily lend itself to a narrow doctrine.<sup>376</sup>

In assessing Obama's presidency according to the earlier established five-prong test for evaluating domestic factors, he faced: (1) a foreign policy team with varying views but a shared openness to discussion; (2) a Democratically-controlled Congress during years one and two and a divided Congress during years three and four of his presidency; (3) a strong presidency as a result of following Bush's presidency; (4) initially strong, though primarily weak public support; and (5) a domestic economy in crisis. Overall, this assessment demonstrates that in terms of the domestic factors critical to grand strategy implementation, Obama faced a mixed bag, with some factors working in his favor and others hindering his success. A weak domestic economy and an uncooperative Congress were particularly influential in determining how successful he could be at implementing his grand strategy, and they ultimately forced him to moderate his grand strategy. As a result of these domestic constraints, his modified grand strategy was less interventionist, with a stronger emphasis on renewing American "leadership from behind."

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<sup>376</sup> Michael Hirsh, "Obama: The No-Doctrine President," *National Journal*, March 29, 2011, accessed April 27, 2013, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/nationalsecurity/obama-the-no-doctrine-president-20110329>.

Based on the two-prong test for determining whether a president has succeeded in grand strategy implementation: (1) U.S. foreign policy during Obama's presidency often aligned with his grand strategy; and (2) the policies he put in place that aligned with his grand strategy often had positive outcomes. Thus, based on this test, it is clear that although Obama faced a number of checks at the domestic level, he adapted his grand strategy and ultimately succeeded in implementing it. While the long-term success of his grand strategy is yet to be determined, in the short-term, it has improved the global standing of the U.S. Faced with the challenge of following in the footsteps of the Bush Doctrine, which had pushed the United States' global standing to an all-time low, he successfully wound down the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, shifted the rhetoric surrounding the War on Terror, and restored the United States' standing in the world. His relative success can be explained by a set of interconnected factors at the individual, domestic, and system levels of analysis that impacted each other and ultimately facilitated his attempt at implementing a modified grand strategy. His administration serves as a case study of the overlapping conditions that simultaneously obstruct and allow a president to put a grand strategy in place: a broad, explicitly clear idea; an impermissive domestic environment rooted in hyper-partisanship and poor public approval; and a new form of backseat international leadership.

## Conclusion

In applying the question of under what conditions a president can implement a grand strategy given the nature of domestic and international opportunities and constraints, and what the implications of doing so are for U.S. foreign policy, to the presidencies of Carter, Bush, and Obama, a number of significant conclusions can be drawn. First, examining Carter's failed attempt at grand strategy implementation provides an ideal case study of the conditions that make it impossible for a president to put a grand strategy in place. Grand strategy implementation requires a strong and effective leader under the domestic conditions outlined in the five-prong test (unity of foreign policy team, party alignment between Congress and the president, strong presidency, public support, and a healthy domestic economy), with certain international conditions in place.

Evidence of Carter's failed attempt at grand strategy implementation can be found at the individual, domestic, and systemic levels. At the individual level, his failure can be traced to his operational code, leadership, and communication skills. Although his operational code and grand strategy shifted significantly in a conflictual direction in response to domestic and international realities, neither his original grand strategy nor his later, more aggressive one were clear and easily implemented. Both were too focused on human rights promotion and neither was sufficient for addressing jarring international crises. Also at the individual level, his attempt at grand strategy implementation was hindered by his poor leadership and communication skills, which prohibited him from effectively articulating his foreign policy strategy and managing his team of advisors. Ultimately, his personal characteristics exacerbated the problems he faced domestically.

At the domestic level, the necessary conditions were also not in place. He faced tensions among his team of advisors, an uncooperative Congress, an institutionally weak presidency in the aftermath of the Vietnam and Watergate scandals, weak public support, and a flaggingly economy that muddled his grand strategy. In fact, the only domestic factor that had the potential to work in his favor—a Democratically-controlled Congress during all but the final year of his presidency—was negated by his poor relations with Democratic congressional leaders. The performance of Carter's grand strategy at the systemic level was not much better. He was faced with significant international challenges including the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the energy crisis, and the Iran hostage crisis. In each of these cases, he reacted with lofty rhetoric and aggrandized threats rather than a timely response. This resulted in his failure to push the Soviets out of Afghanistan, his inability to bring down oil prices, and his botched attempt to rescue the Iran hostages. These defeats destroyed any public support that remained for the Carter Doctrine and demonstrated his lack of success in grand strategy implementation.

Overall, successful grand strategy requires: (1) a clear, simple, easily implemented idea based on the president's beliefs; (2) a permissive domestic environment rooted in presidential popularity, leadership, and partisan support; and (3) international leadership rather than reaction. In the case of Carter, he put forth a logically coherent grand strategy, based on an oversimplified view of the world and an overemphasis on human rights, which was difficult to implement. He was up against a highly impermissive domestic environment rooted in presidential dislike, distrust, and unpopularity. He was caught off guard by crises that repeatedly demonstrated the failed outcome of his grand strategy at the international level. Unsurprisingly, he is a case study of a failed attempt at grand strategy implementation.

The same factors at the individual, domestic, and systemic levels of analysis that constrained Carter's attempt at grand strategy implementation facilitated Bush's. Examining Bush's successful attempt at grand strategy implementation provides an ideal case study of the conditions that make it possible for a president to put a grand strategy—though not a good one—in place. At the individual level, his success can be traced to his operational code and management style. He is unique among the case studies presented in that he did not enter office with a grand strategy. Prior to the September 11 attacks, he possessed a worldview and a set of beliefs about the international system, but his grand strategy itself was a direct product of the attacks. His grand strategy was based on the principles of American primacy and preemptive war. It was clear, easily implemented, and stemmed directly from global realities, all factors that made it relatively easy for him to put in place. Also at the individual level, his attempt at grand strategy implementation was facilitated by his closed management style, by which he privileged those advisors whose policy preferences aligned closely with his grand strategy over those whose preferences did not.

The necessary conditions were also in place at the domestic level, where he faced a divided foreign policy team, a supportive Congress, a strong presidency in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, strong public support, and a healthy domestic economy, factors that facilitated his attempt at grand strategy implementation. In fact, the only domestic factor that had the potential to work against him—the divide among his foreign policy advisors—was mitigated by his management style. Bush's performance at the systemic level was equally strong. Whereas Carter was confronted with significant systemic challenges that demanded timely, decisive responses, with the exception of the September 11 attacks, Bush's presidency was defined by action, not reaction. In the aftermath of the attacks, he passed sweeping counterterrorism

legislation and led the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, all part of his global War on Terror, influenced directly by his operational code and grand strategy. Bush put forth a logically coherent grand strategy, based on an oversimplified view of the world and the United States' role in it, that was easy to implement. He benefitted from a highly permissive domestic environment rooted in the September 11 rally effect and a healthy domestic economy. Excluding the September 11 attacks, he initiated bold systemic action, even without international authorization. He is a case study of a president who succeeded in grand strategy implementation as a result of the usual domestic checks having fallen out of place.

However, just because Bush was capable of implementing a grand strategy does not mean that it was necessarily good for the United States' standing in the world. This is partly because the domestic factors that allow for or constrain implementation often have little to do with U.S. national interests and a lot to do with domestic power alignments. Thus, the question of whether a president has *successfully* implemented a grand strategy is distinct from whether he has implemented a *successful* grand strategy. In the case of the Bush Doctrine, its successful implementation had a lot to do with a permissive national and international environment, but in the long-run, its policies were not successful. In particular, the long wars that he initiated in Afghanistan and Iraq damaged the global standing of the U.S. and were highly costly, economically as well as in human lives.

Obama, as the third case study, provides an example of a president who faced a mixed array of opportunities and constraints, rather than primarily hurtful or helpful factors, as in the cases of Carter and Bush, respectively. Evidence of Obama's attempt at grand strategy implementation can be found at the individual, domestic, and systemic levels. At the individual level, his success at putting a moderated version of his grand strategy in place can be traced to

his operational code, leadership, and communication skills. His original grand strategy, directly inspired by his operational code, was very clearly articulated, but not easily implemented in light of domestic and international realities. Thus, he put a modified grand strategy in place that was more attuned to real-world challenges. Both were based on the underlying principles of renewed relationships, cooperative engagement, and “leading from behind.” Also at the individual level, his attempt at grand strategy implementation was facilitated by his aspirational communication and management styles, which allowed him to effectively articulate his grand strategy vision and oversee his team of advisors.

At the domestic level, Obama encountered mixed conditions. He faced tensions among his foreign policy advisors, a stalled Congress, a relatively strong presidency, rapidly deteriorating public support, and a struggling economy. This unique combination of factors simultaneously assisted and hindered his attempt at grand strategy implementation, with Congress and the economy posing the most serious threat to his attempt. The performance of his grand strategy at the systemic level was generally successful, though more so after he modified his grand strategy. He was faced with significant international challenges including the inherited legacy of the war in Afghanistan, China’s rise, and uprisings in Egypt and Libya. In each of these cases, he employed his inclusive, deliberative decision making process and formalistic management style to address the challenges at hand with the help of allies and by means of international institutions. Another common thread that runs through these events is that Obama was not afraid to make unconventional, unexpected decisions that went against the recommendations of his foreign policy advisors but aligned closely with his grand strategy. As a result, he undertook a 30,000-troop-surge in Afghanistan with the eventual goal of winding down



the war, implemented the “pivot to Asia” with the objective of offsetting China’s rise, and oversaw “leadership from behind” in the U.S. response in uprisings in Egypt and Libya.

These examples prove that the Obama Doctrine in its moderated form was equipped to respond to international challenges. Obama put forth a grand strategy that was logically coherent, though initially difficult to implement. The Obama Doctrine consisted of a clearly articulated, yet broad set of national interests, and it was not based on an oversimplified view of the world. In putting it in place, he was up against a mixed domestic environment rooted in hyper-partisanship and economic woes. His responses to international challenges were innovative and based on his operational code and grand strategy. His is a case study of an attempt at grand strategy implementation that was neither an overwhelming failure nor an overwhelming success.

Taken in its entirety, this analysis demonstrates that if a president is a strong and effective leader with a clear strategy in mind, conditions domestically are such that he can work effectively within them, and his grand strategy aligns with global realities, then he can put a grand strategy in place. Interestingly, these findings point to the fact that “grand strategies are not nearly as important as grand strategists like to think.”<sup>377</sup> There is a reason that history has endowed grand strategies with a generally bad reputation: they often place value on an overly narrow set of national interests and shortsighted operational plans for achieving them. It is no coincidence that U.S. history’s most memorable grand strategies—the Truman Doctrine, and the Carter and Bush Doctrines, of course—all fell into the trap of subscribing to an oversimplified view of the political universe. In this regard, the Obama Doctrine—despite the administration’s hesitation to label it as such—is unique. It is simultaneously broad, flexible, and palatable to a broad range of actors and rigid in its commitment to multilateralism, engagement, restraint, and

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<sup>377</sup> Drezner, 1.

renewal. It prescribes a set of national interests, but it is not dogmatic and does not rely on oversimplifications. As a result of these seemingly inconsistent elements, Obama has been labeled by many as an “ad hoc” decision maker with regards to foreign policy.

However, the fact is that:

Geopolitics today is too complex, messy, and various to be bent to America’s will by an overarching doctrine like containment, or a massive initiative like the Marshall Plan, or a single breakthrough like Nixon’s trip to China. A doctrine is what put the country in a deep hole; climbing out [will require] restraint, flexibility, and opportunism.<sup>378</sup>

Obama’s presidency has been marked by both massive global disruption—in the form of the Great Recession and the Arab uprisings—and a power transition—in the form of the United States’ confrontation with China, a rising challenger.<sup>379</sup> His management style, rooted in his deliberative operational code and grand strategy, whereby he opens as many advising channels as possible, has thus far allowed him to navigate these challenges as they arise. This contrasts directly with Bush, who was a “gut player” rather than an analytical decision maker, and created a “bubble” to protect him from any advice that did not conform to his pre-existing views.<sup>380</sup> Their respective styles are reflected in the nature of their grand strategies: Bush’s was rigid, dogmatic, and overly narrow in scope, whereas Obama’s is a set of principles that guide his decision making process. The latter is almost certainly more likely to achieve success in the long run.

Looking forward, it is worth considering Obama’s second term (2012-2016) in light of this analysis. Assuming that there have been no major shifts in his operational code, his grand strategy will likely be similar to the one that he implemented during his first term. However, as time goes on, the Obama Doctrine may be trending in a more cautious direction. This is

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<sup>378</sup> Packer

<sup>379</sup> Drezner, 3.

<sup>380</sup> Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 137.

evidenced by his selection of Senator John Kerry as secretary of state and Senator Chuck Hagel as secretary of defense, both of whom are decidedly less interventionist than Clinton and Rice were in his first administration. This raises questions about how Obama's second term foreign policy will differ, if at all, from that of his first term. Will it align more or less closely with his grand strategy? How will his grand strategy fare under the weight of sequestration and an even more toxic partisan environment? How will it respond to events at the international level, such as the Syrian revolution, the Eurozone crisis, and the ongoing drone campaign in Pakistan? If his first term is any indication, the Obama Doctrine will overcome domestic constraints to rise to these complex challenges, adapting itself in the process.

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